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# ONWARDS.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

“ANNE DYSART,” “ROSA GREY,”

&c. &c.

“To thinke without desert of gentle deed,  
And noble worth to be advanced hye;  
Such prayse is shame; but honour, vertue's meed,  
Doth beare the fayrest flowre in honourable seed.”

FAEBIE QUEENE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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# ONWARDS.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE winter was pretty far advanced when Honor Sky was removed from Thornbury. The weather was mild for the season, and tiny points of green began to pierce the brown mould, although it was only February. She had been sent for to the Vicarage one day, and informed by Mrs. Winthrop that she must prepare to go in two days. Honor curtsied, and ventured to ask where she was to go to?

"You will, of course, be sent to a place where you will be well treated and properly taken care of," Mrs. Winthrop answered, re-



provingly ; “that ought to be sufficient for you. I do not approve of idle curiosity, and make it a point not to gratify it.”

Poor Honor was silenced ; but, notwithstanding, she still felt curious. Afterwards she asked her Aunt Keziah if she thought it was wrong for her to wish to know where she was going, as Mrs. Winthrop had said it was. Now, poor Mrs. Keziah had been very anxious to know too, and she was much dismayed to hear that Mrs. Winthrop thought it wrong. As usual, however, she resigned herself, though not without a sigh, to this lady’s view of the question.

“Ah !” she said, “the ways of Providence is past finding out, and, sure enough, we has no right to find them out.”

Honor, young as she was, could not, however, see that Mrs. Winthrop and Providence were exactly the same, and during the next two days, she could not help speculating very anxiously as to where she might be going.

Jim had been more fortunate. Mr. Winthrop had informed him he was to be sent to —, a very large town, in a different part of the county. All he knew about Honor's destination was, that it was not the same as his own. He was in high spirits at his prospects.

Little Honor cried bitterly at quitting her aunt and Mrs. Gannaway, who vied in overwhelming her with blessings and caresses. She felt sorry, too, to part with Jim. Their fate had hitherto been so closely associated, they had shared together so many adventures and trials, had so partaken of the same hopes, and rejoiced in the same success, as to make them, in a measure, feel as if their welfare was inseparable. Even Jim, when the parting moment came, felt a shadow of regret at the separation from his old companion, amid all his joy at the progress of his own fortunes, which quite equalled his most sanguine expectations.

“ Jim,” said Honor, “ won’t you write me a line, and let me know how you be getting on ? ”

“ I will, Honor,” he answered, kindly, but rather condescendingly, for the opinion was ingrained in Jim that he was very superior to Honor ; “ I shall be glad to hear of you, too. I hope as how these ugly marks will go off your face.”


Honor coloured, and felt vexed. She had never been vain of her beauty, or ever been aware that she possessed any, but it seemed something like unkindness in Jim to allude to it now.

“ It bean’t my fault, Jim,” she said, “ and Aunt and Mrs. Gannaway like me all the same.”

To this Jim made no answer, and Honor, amid her own tears and the tears of her Aunt and friend, got into the train, the engine shrieked, and she was gone. The poor child felt very sad and lonely at the idea of going

among strangers, and to a place the very name of which she did not know, for she had been put in charge of the guard, like a parcel. When at last the violence of her grief had in some measure abated, and she began to look at the scenes through which she was passing, she perceived she was travelling on the same line by which she had come to Thornbury. After she had gone a great distance—the greater part of the way—she was told she must change carriages for ———, the nearest railway station to ———, she could not catch the name, but it was evidently that of the village to which she was going. When she had arrived at this place, she found a spring-cart, driven by a very civil labourer, waiting to convey her to her final destination.

It was late in the February day when Honor drew towards the end of her journey. It had been showery, but not a wet day; fortunately it had ceased to rain ere she left the train. Great masses of dark clouds floated in the sky,



but, though threatening in aspect, Honor could not refrain from admiring them. She watched their ever-changing forms driven by the wind, which blew wildly over the open plains, and her anxiety was, child-like, for the minute, diverted. Honor rejoiced to find herself on the plains again. The timber-clad undulations and the mossy wood-paths of Thornbury were far prettier, it was true; but the little girl experienced a feeling of freedom and a sense of vastness in her native level country, she never felt where the horizon was bounded, and where all the objects her eye beheld were near. Unconsciously, she seemed to yearn for a feeling of the beyond—a glimpse of something that the senses could not entirely grasp, and which a mere undulating country does not afford. Mountains soaring into the inaccessible regions of cloud and storm, and wide and level plains fading away on the horizon, have this character in common, that they seem to lead us to the very

borders of the unknown, and fascinate the mind by the very mystery to which they have conducted us.

But Honor had not proceeded very far on her way when another sound seemed to mingle with the wild sweep of the blast—a sound deeper, hollower, more solemn. She listened eagerly, her face flushed with expectation, as if she had suddenly heard the voice of a friend, and her eye brightened as she turned to the man who drove her.

“Is that sound I hear—”

“The sea,” he said.

Honor felt at her heart a bound of delight. All her old love for the sea awoke once more with fresh vigour, and she asked :—

“Am I going near the sea?”

“Oh, yes, bless you!—close at hand!”

And in effect the road having led them on a slight rising ground, a magnificent spectacle now presented itself to Honor’s admiring gaze.

Far away, beyond the dark, wintry plains in the foreground, stretched a long yellow strip of sandy beach, on which roared, and dashed, and foamed, lines of stormy breakers. Far out to sea, the foam was tossed wildly into the air, and fell again in showers of silvery spray. Over all, brooded a wintry cloud. Many might have thought it a bleak and cheerless scene, but to Honor Sky it was beautiful. She made no remark on it, however, but enjoyed its charms in silence, as she had an instinctive feeling that her companion would not share her feelings. Much delighted was she, too, with the broad river which next met her gaze, and the sail-boats—ships, as Honor called them—and then she asked her conductor if it was a nice place he was taking her to?

“Very nice place,” he said. “The squire be a nice mon, and so be the lady. Folks say as how the young squire be wildish.”

“But the school-mistress?” asked Honor.

“ Oh ! I doan’t know much about she.”

“ Am I to live with her ? ” asked Honor.

“ I be to drive you to the Hall, my dear—  
I knows no more about it.”

And, with this information, Honor was forced to be content, though she felt very curious to know more. It was almost dark as the spring-cart drove up to the back-door of “ the Hall.”

Honor gazed with deep interest, not unmixed with awe, on the old ivied walls of the Hall, which seemed to her a very grand place—much grander than the Vicarage at Thornbury, which had hitherto been her standard of magnificence. Its grandeur seemed to oppress and dishearten her, and she could hardly refrain from weeping with a sense of loneliness and a fear of the great people, with whom she appeared, to her amazement, about to be brought in contact. What if they should be all like Mrs. Winthrop !

There would be no Aunt Keziah here, and



no gentle Mrs. Gannaway. Honor had been so happy with them—happier, she thought, than she should ever be again.

The cart had now stopped, and Honor found herself in a kitchen, where there was a blazing fire and a lamp depending from the ceiling. Honor shrunk from the gaze of the strange servants. She wished she had gone straight to the abode of some humble school-mistress. A fat cook drew her kindly to the fire, and invited her to sit down. The cordial voice somewhat comforted Honor, and she was on the point of complying with the invitation, when a beautiful young lady, in a white evening dress, entered the kitchen.

It seemed like a vision to Honor. She coloured, and curtsied low.

“You are Honor Sky,” said a voice, peculiarly sweet in its tone—a voice which reassured the trembling, timid little stranger—“the girl recommended by Mr. St. John.”

“Yes, miss, please.”

"I am afraid you have had a long, cold journey. Cook, will get you some warm supper, and you shall go to bed. You are to remain here all night, and to-morrow you shall go to Miss Wormsley's."

Tears started to Honor's eyes. The beautiful lady, who spoke so kindly and had so sweet a voice, seemed like some angel. The desolate child was comforted; but something stuck so in her throat, she could not speak.


And now a plate of smoking hash and some tea were placed before her. After she began, she found she was hungry, and her meal seemed to restore both her strength and spirits. When she had finished, the fat cook took her to an apartment at the top of the house. The wide staircases, and the carpets, and the lamps, and the glimpses of the rooms and the furniture as she passed, all seemed to Honor very fine. She began to feel very forlorn again amidst all this grandeur. It was a relief to her to find herself in the

smaller and humbler, though very tidy, little apartment destined for her use. Here the cook left her, but she had not been gone many seconds ere the door was opened, and in came the beautiful lady in white whom she had already seen. She said that she had come to see that everything was comfortable, and then she asked Honor if she had a Bible? The latter having replied that she had, the young lady next began to question her very kindly about Thornbury, and what she had done there, and the relatives or friends she had left behind. It was a great relief to Honor to answer these questions; her auditor listened so kindly, and seemed so interested to hear about her Aunt Keziah, and Mrs. Ganaway, and the small-pox, and all the events of which poor little Honor's heart was full to bursting.

Then she comforted the poor child, and told her Miss Wormsley would be kind to her, and that she should always find a friend in

herself. And with a grateful heart, when the lady was gone, she thanked God, who, in her loneliness, had sent her such a friend. Little Honor, as she lay in bed, recalled with delight the soft form, and the lustrous eyes, and the sweet voice, and the white dress, and the kind words which had so charmed her, and with the fair vision before her mental eyes, she dropped into deep repose.

There was a booming sound in Honor's ears when she woke the next morning, and she felt a demi-consciousness that she was not where she used to be. Starting up in bed, she looked eagerly round. Opposite the bed was the lattice. The green ivy-leaves peeped in all round, but it seemed to Honor that nothing was to be seen from it but the grey-blue sky. Jumping out of bed and looking from the window, she perceived that what she had taken for the sky was the long line of the sea, to the sound of whose measured boom she had awakened. The window was so high up



in one of the gables, that the intervening shore was hid, and Honor could see nothing but the sky and the sea. She was yet contemplating the boundless prospect, when the cook entered her little room.

"So you are up, my dear," she said. "I did not call you sooner, as Miss Hurst said as how you was not to be disturbed."

"Miss Hurst! be that the pretty lady?" asked Honor.

"Yes, my dear;" said the cook, pleased that her young lady had made a favourable impression on the stranger. "Now dress, and come down to breakfast."

After breakfast Honor had another interview with Miss Hurst, who seemed even prettier, and whose voice sounded even sweeter than it had done the night before. She bade Honor get on her bonnet and accompany her to Miss Wormsley. Honor obeyed with no little trepidation, wondering much what kind of person Miss Wormsley

would turn out, but hoping the best from her connection with Miss Hurst.

It was with a little nervousness, but happy on the whole, that she tripped behind Miss Hurst along the shore of the river towards the straggling little village, answering the kind questions of the latter about her previous life and the instruction she had hitherto received. When Miss Hurst heard that she was a native of Dredham :—

“Why, then,” she said, “you have returned quite to your own country. Here, you are only fifteen miles from Dredham.”

They had now arrived at the school-house, a very small building for such a purpose, but very neat and clean. In one end of it resided Miss Wormsley, the mistress, to whom Honor was presented as inmate and future pupil-teacher. Miss Wormsley did not take Honor’s fancy quite so much as Miss Hurst had done. She was a very tall, fine woman, about thirty years of age, with high features and an active,

business-like air. Her manner towards Honor was at once commanding and patronising, and even towards Miss Hurst, it appeared to partake of the latter quality. It struck Honor, child though she was, that Miss Hurst was a little afraid of her. Miss Wormsley began by questioning Honor with regard to her attainments. Poor Honor felt very nervous, and Miss Hurst appeared almost as anxious as herself that she should make a good appearance in the eyes of the "governess."

"You seem to have been tolerably well grounded," at last said that individual, with an air of authority; "although there have evidently been errors in the system pursued, which it will be my business to rectify. I trust you will prove attentive."

While Miss Hurst encouragingly remarked she was sure she would, and Miss Wormsley looked as if to be sure of that was impossible,

and as if it were very foolish of Miss Hurst to say so, they passed into the school-room. It was a tidy apartment, occupied both by boys and girls, who had a more intelligent appearance than Honor's old acquaintances at Thornbury; but they seemed all very young. Miss Hurst spoke to several of them, and her notice seemed to give pleasure and pride. To Miss Wormsley, they were obedient and attentive; but they did not appear to possess much affection for her. Honor could not wonder that they should prefer Miss Hurst. She was not long, however, in discovering that, though far inferior to Mr. Gannaway in acquirements, Miss Wormsley was a much better teacher—for the school, at all events—inasmuch as she brought her own mind to bear upon each individual mind among her pupils, and she was not satisfied with half performances of any kind. She could not, it is true, teach her pupils either to love her or their lessons, but they learnt, if not from the spontaneous obe-



dience of hearts that love, yet with the sincerity of those who know that their work must be done, and that it will not go unappreciated.

Miss Wormsley kept Honor harder at work than Mr. Gannaway had ever done; but Honor liked it, and would have been quite happy had she been certain that she gave satisfaction to her teacher, and that the latter liked her. But there was something in her manner which made her doubt if she did. Hitherto Honor had always been a favourite, and though Miss Wormsley was never positively unkind or unjust to her, it vexed and depressed her to think she had not been able to please her.

Nor was this a mere fancy on Honor's part. As Miss Wormsley said to Miss Hurst, she had resolved "not to be too quick in forming her opinion. The girl was certainly sharp and intelligent enough, but she was too fond of story-books and poetry-books, and too soft-


spoken, and had too flattering ways for her." The real truth was, Miss Wormsley prided herself upon forming an independent judgment, and, like many people who do, was, without being conscious of it, very apt, out of a kind of antagonism merely, and from no just reason, to take a contrary view to others. She was, too, but equally unconsciously, not a little jealous of Miss Hurst's regard for Honor. It was the joy of Honor's heart that Miss Hurst at least liked her, while she loved Miss Hurst with a veneration and a passion known only to childhood.

Although by no means aware of the extent of the little girl's devotion for her, Miss Hurst could not fail to perceive how the former listened and clung to her. They had many conversations together, and Miss Hurst lent Honor many books on different subjects. In the eyes of Honor, Miss Hurst was equally removed by her merit and by her fortunes from the rest of the world. It never struck

her that she might have cares and sorrows like other people.

Honor sometimes heard from Thornbury, as Mrs. Keziah, though so old and infirm, could still write a little. She and Mrs. Gannaway kept pretty well in general, and, by "God's blessing and Mrs. Winthrop's kindness," continued to live. Mrs. Keziah sold a good many birds, and Mrs. Gannaway was tolerably well supplied with needlework. They had both heard that the school did not go on quite so well as in the days of Mr. Gannaway, her "sainted husband," as his widow now called him.

It was now a delusion of poor Mrs. Gannaway that her married life had been a very happy one, and that her husband had been the most amiable of men — "a little quick in his temper," perhaps, but still her matrimonial days had been the golden days of existence. Honor she loved quite as much as her aunt did, and rejoiced equally when a



letter arrived, telling them of her well-doing. It was a matter of pride, as well as affectionate sympathy, when she heard that her husband's former pupil had sent up examination-papers to Government, which had been highly approved, and that she was at last duly apprenticed as pupil-teacher at Derringham.

It was often a cause of deep regret to Honor, whose affections were as tenacious as her memory, that she never heard from Jim. He had written to her once, two or three months after her being settled at Derringham, apparently in high spirits, and giving her a pleasing account of the school in which he had been placed, and of his own position in it. It was situated in a large town, and contained a great many boys and several pupil-teachers besides himself; but, though he was the youngest, the master, he said, appeared to approve of him more than any of the others. The master was a very clever man, much cleverer than Mr. Gannaway, and so was the

rector of the parish. He came to school nearly every day, and took a great deal of notice of him.

Honor was delighted to hear such good news of her old companion, and looked long and eagerly for another letter. She wrote twice or thrice in the hope of hearing again, but no letter ever came, and she began to fear some evil fortune must have befallen him. Her mind, however, was, after a time, set at rest on that point, for when Mr. St. John came round for the school inspection, Honor made bold to ask him if he knew what had become of her old schoolfellow, James Carver.

"He is still at ——, my good girl," said Mr. St. John, "and, like yourself, doing well. He is a sharp, smart, active fellow, and very useful in the school."

"I wonder he does not write to me," said Honor, her lip trembling a little, and a tear ready to start; "he said he would."

"He is very busy, and has a great deal to

think of. That must be some excuse for him. When you grow a little older, you will find that, after a long separation, a correspondence is very apt to drop."

"I should never have dropt it. I did not think Jim would have so soon forgotten me," she said, dolefully.

"Perhaps he has not forgotten you. Most likely he is only busy."

Honor did not reply, but she still looked grave, and Mr. St. John added:—

"You must not expect boys to have such soft hearts as little girls. Shall I tell James Carver to write to you when I see him?" he asked, kindly.


"No, sir, thank you. You can tell him, if you please, sir, that you saw me, and I was asking after him, and then he can write if he likes."

Mr. St. John smiled. He was interested by her soft-heartedness, and the little touch of dignity she had just displayed added to that

interest. He was glad to perceive, too, that she was fast recovering from the disfiguring effects of the small-pox. Remembering the (as it had seemed to him) somewhat romantic history of these two children, he was sorry Jim had disappointed his affectionate play-fellow, yet, considering the circumstances in which he had been thrown, it did not seem to Mr. St. John very unnatural or very surprising. He could not think altogether badly of him on that account. It only served to confirm the feeling he had always entertained, that Honor was the more lovable and interesting child of the two.

## CHAPTER II.

As time went on, Miss Wormsley did not increase in cordiality towards Honor. Still, she was never positively unkind, but she rarely spoke to her, except to give some order or direction. She could not forgive Honor for being a general favourite. "People," she said, "who were general favourites, always made sacrifices to sincerity. It was impossible it could be otherwise. She had certainly never caught Honor in a falsehood; but she was "everything to everybody," and Miss Wormsley "could not stand that." All Honor's little advances to herself were repulsed, or passed unheeded. When lessons





were over, and they were both at needlework, she seldom spoke. Honor at last resigned herself to this kind of life, and gave up the hope of liking or being liked by Miss Wormsley. It was comfort to think Miss Hurst liked and approved her, and, in fact, this circumstance had much to do with Miss Wormsley's prejudice. If there was anybody in the world Miss Wormsley loved it was Mary Hurst, and she was increasingly jealous of the favour of the latter for Honor, and the more so that she believed it to be unjust—a mere fancy created by the flattering ways of an artful child. “She did not approve of favourites,” she sometimes ventured to say to Miss Hurst.

Burns, with his usual knowledge of human nature, says :—

“ Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as others see us,  
It wad frae mony an error free us  
An' foolish notion.”

No power had ever bestowed this gift on Miss

Wormsley, who had her favourite as well as Miss Hurst. The especial object of her preference was a girl two or three years younger than Honor—a rather plain-looking, grave child, who learned her lessons very punctually, paid attention to, and understood Miss Wormsley's explanations, and was not guilty of the sin of being anybody's favourite but her own. Miss Wormsley was destined, however, to experience a severe disappointment in this child. Just as the latter was beginning to get over the early difficulties of education, to read with some fluency, and to answer the questions put to her with some intelligence, her parents removed her from school. Miss Wormsley was in consternation, and Mary Hurst, when informed of the misfortune, duly sympathised with her distress, and set off to try to induce them to send her back again. John and Sarah Jones—the child's parents—were ignorant, boorish, and prejudiced. The father was a day-labourer on the farm of a

certain Farmer Goodwin. Farmer Goodwin was a *gent*, that is, a yeoman or farmer, who cultivated his own land, and the Joneses were, consequently, not dependents on the family at the Hall. It was on a broiling hot day in summer that Miss Hurst set out on her mission of remonstrance. Mary did not at all like her errand. She was much afraid of meeting with some rebuff, and a rebuff always frightened her; but she remembered the agreement she had made with her brother and Frank Austen, on the first night she had ever seen the latter. The recollection of it made her think of him, and she pictured him now in the distant country where he was, toiling to surmount difficulties far greater than hers. And the thought strengthened her, and strengthened her also to bear the anguish she felt when she remembered the thousands of watery miles, and, perchance, the long years, which lay between her and him whom her heart most loved.

Mary had gone to Jones's at the dinner-hour, that she might find both husband and wife at home, and in this expectation she was not disappointed. Sarah, too, was at home, and was, with her usual gravity and composure, washing the plates and dishes which had been used at dinner. Both Jones and his wife were elderly people, or perhaps their hard mode of life and exposure to all weathers had made them look older than they were. The father was a hard-featured man, dark-complexioned and sun-burnt, with a look at once of stupidity and obstinacy. The mother was a tall, thin, pale, wiry-looking woman, much more intelligent in countenance than her husband, but with a certain aspect which seemed to denote narrowness of mind and acerbity of temper. Mrs. Jones guessed what Mary had come for, and was on the defensive at once. Mrs. Jones, like many ignorant persons of her class, considered it a favour to her superiors to send her children

to school, and she felt Miss Hurst and Miss Wormsley were encroaching on her condescension.

"I have come," commenced Mary, with some trepidation, but in as pleasant a tone as she could command, "to ask why Sarah has not been at school this week. She was getting on so very nicely, and Miss Wormsley is grieved to lose so promising a pupil."

"I doesn't see the use of education," growled out John Jones, obstinately.

"She be better educated than me," said her mother, "and if she have got on quick, more reason for taking her home quick. I doesn't see as how the young uns needs more larnin' than their parents. I doesn't see what it be a-doing for them. My Sarah washes, and scrubs, and works as well as if she could read like the parson."

"I doesn't see the use of education," again reiterated the husband.

"But Sarah sees the use of it—don't you

Sarah?" asked Miss Hurst, feeling certain she should find an ally in the child herself.

The girl answered gravely :—

"No, miss, I doesn't—don't," she added, correcting herself.

"What! don't you like to be able to read and write, and to study the Bible for yourself, and to know about the things of which you are ignorant?"

"No, miss. I likes better to work in the fields. I has been long enough at school. I wants to be a-earning of summat, like other girls."

As the daughter spoke, the mother looked proud and pleased, and the father's countenance became more and more dogged. Still Mary did not give up. She entered into a rapid, and, for her, eloquent—for her whole soul was in what she said—detail of the advantages of education; but she might as well have talked to posts. At last she gave it up, saying she was sorry, as Miss Wormsley

had looked forward to having Sarah for her pupil-teacher when Honor Sky should leave, or even before then, if the school should increase sufficiently. To her surprise, this seemed to make some impression on Mrs. Jones, though the father remained as stolid and indifferent as ever.

“An’ s’pose I was to let her go back to school, would she be paid like governess?” asked the mother eagerly and sharply, like one who drives a hard bargain.

“Perhaps, if she were equally attentive and clever, when she has grown up.”

“And what would she have in the meantime?”

“Nothing for two years, at least,” Mary answered, much disgusted; “but at the end of that time, if she became pupil-teacher, she would be maintained free of expense.”

“Well, miss, I shall think it over,” said Mrs. Jones. “Two years be a long time for a big girl like Sarah to be a-doing nothing for

herself. We be a poor family, miss," she added, changing the eager, sharp tone, in which she had hitherto spoken, into a kind of whine ; " and the loss of the labour of one is a'most more than we can afford, and I hope, miss, if you has anything to give, you won't forget us if I sends Sarah back."

Mary did not answer. She had conceived a profound dislike to Mrs. Jones, and was confirmed in an opinion she had always entertained that Sarah was not a very nice girl. There was an extreme narrowness and worldliness of mind about the whole family, very repulsive to her.

She told Miss Wormsley of the result of her visit, and the impression she had received. Miss Wormsley listened with respect, but evidently considered Miss Hurst's opinion to be the result of her prejudices and her favouritism as regarded Honor. She merely answered :—

" I am glad Sarah is coming back."



"So am I," Miss Hurst replied, and added with a slight degree of provocation, unusual in her, "as she is your favourite."

"My favourite, Miss Hurst! I have no favourite. There is nothing flattering or genteel about Sarah Jones, certainly, but she is a steady girl, and my experience has taught me those are the most to be depended on. I like to be just."

Mary made no answer, as she hated anything approaching altercation, and the subject dropped for the present; but not from Mary's memory. She began to have a faint guess of Miss Wormsley's feelings, and, with her usual kindness of heart, tried to think of some way of showing the latter how much she valued her faithful services.

Miss Wormsley had some turn for science—for natural history, in particular—and Mary had once or twice heard her express a wish—but a wish unaccompanied apparently by the hope of attainment—to possess a small aqua-

rium, that should contain marine plants and animals. For that a large glass-case was necessary, but its price was much beyond what Miss Wormsley could afford, or ever expected to be able to afford, so that she remained tolerably content with wishing for it, as we wish in a vague way for that which we know to be unattainable. This it was that Mary now determined to present her with, if it should prove within the compass of her finances. Accordingly, with some little sacrifice on her own part, she found it would be in her power to make Miss Wormsley happy. And very happy Miss Wormsley was—happy in the possession of a treasure she had long coveted—and happier still in obtaining it from the affection of Mary Hurst. That was probably one of the happiest days of Miss Wormsley's life, on which the aquarium was established on the top of a green pedestal in her parlour window.

Its arrival created quite a sensation in

Derringham, and more especially in the school. But perhaps there was no one so curious to inspect its wonders as Honor Sky. It contained some of the treasures of her beloved sea. Once she had longed to know about the things beyond it—now she longed to know of the things within it. Exaggerated reports were circulated through the school with regard to the marvels of the aquarium. No one had yet seen it except through the window, which was a lattice ; and as it was separated from the path by a flower-border, the glimpse had been but a vague one. It was said to contain objects of great value, and the stones at the bottom were reported to be pearls.

Honor, being older and better instructed than the rest, did not share in this belief, but she was quite as curious as if she had. She had, however, no better opportunity of gratifying her curiosity than the others. The aquarium was placed in the parlour, which Miss Wormsley always kept clean and dusted

herself, and which was never used except on grand occasions, to receive Mr. and Mrs. Hurst, or Mr. St. John, or Mr. Lane, the non-resident incumbent of the very poor living of Derringham, on the rare occasions on which he was able, during the week, to come over from his other living. She and Miss Wormsley, when not in school, generally sat in the kitchen, which it was Honor's business to keep tidy. Honor therefore asked Miss Wormsley if she might go and look at the aquarium, promising that she would not touch it, and saying she should like so much to see the animals moving about in it. But Miss Wormsley refused.

"She could not," she said, "draw a distinction."

"Oh!" cried, Honor, much disappointed, "I should like so much to see it—I would give anything to see it!"

"I do not approve of curiosity," said Miss Wormsley, coldly, who, in another person,

would have understood and approved the kind of curiosity Honor felt. "I positively forbid you to go near it."

Honor's countenance fell, and tears started to her eyes; but she was angry, as well as disappointed, and she murmured something about hoping "some one would give her an opportunity."

Miss Wormsley said, coldly:—

"Mind what you are about, Honor! I am sorry to see you so much out of temper."

From that day, the breach widened between Honor and Miss Wormsley. The latter suspected Honor of an intention to steal unawares a sight of her treasure, and jealously guarded against the suspected intrusion. Honor perceived she was watched, and, conscious of the integrity of her own intentions, felt indignant and angry, which made her sometimes, perhaps, not quite respectful towards her governess. One afternoon, while Miss Wormsley and Honor were seated at tea, they were surprised

by a visit from Farmer Goodwin. The farmer was a man between thirty and forty years of age, of almost gigantic height, with a round, florid face, speckled and sun-burnt, good features, blue eyes, and fair hair. His was an open, honest, but determined countenance, and its expression, at present, seemed to betoken displeasure. Miss Wormsley and Honor were sitting with the door open, and the former rose as he stood on the threshold; but ere she could speak, he began:—

“Your servant, miss! I be come to ask, miss, why you have ’ticed away the girl Sarah Jones from her work to your school? She was my best weeder and dropper. ’Tis not fair, miss, to me or the child!”

Miss Wormsley here entered into a calm and able defence of her own conduct, and expressed her opinion of the advantages of education.

“Education! I see no good on’t for such as them. It only makes ’em sassy, and fancy

they be as good as their betters. They say they get as good an education at them national schools as farmers' sons and daughters, and I should like to know if that's as it should be. It's not just, I tell you, Miss. It spiles 'em for all useful purposes."


Miss Wormsley here invited Mr. Goodwin to partake of a cup of tea, to which he consented, though not with a very good grace, but as he drank, the refreshing beverage seemed to have a happy effect upon him, and he listened with tolerable complacence while Miss Wormsley again advocated the advantages of education, and the right of all to possess them. Not that Farmer Goodwin was convinced, but he admired Miss Wormsley's tall, erect figure, her high features, dark eyes, and decided manner. Though a prejudiced and rather obstinate man, he was, in his way, good-natured and kind-hearted, and he could not withstand the pleasant and intelligent manner in which Miss

.

Wormsley led on a discussion about crops and other farming matters. The fact was, she was anxious to make a convert to the cause of education, and gain a supporter for the school, and she wisely thought that it would be well, as far as it lay in her power, to illustrate the doctrine she preached. After tea, she took Mr. Goodwin all over the school premises, and showed him her books, her register, her accounts, the girls' needlework. Of the latter he approved highly, and her own register and account-books he could not sufficiently express his admiration for. Nothing so well written, or so cleverly kept, had he ever seen before. That such attainments were within the compass of a woman's genius especially surprised him.

"Clever woman," he said to himself. "The cleverest, handsomest woman I ever saw."

Notwithstanding his admiration, however, for Miss Wormsley's qualities, personal and mental, he could not be converted in a minute to the idea that education was good for all,





though he was fain to acknowledge to himself it had been good for Miss Wormsley. Their controversy on the subject assumed now, however, a friendly, jocular aspect, and Mr. Goodwin resigned himself without more ado to the loss of Sarah Jones, who was, however, to weed his garden in the evenings, after lessons were over.

Ere Mr. Goodwin went, Miss Wormsley exhibited to him her aquarium. Honor hoped that she might have seen it at the same time, but Miss Wormsley said to her, as they left the school-room, in the cold, dry manner in which she now usually addressed her :—

“You will remain here, Honor, and put these things to rights.”

Honor felt at once disappointed and angry. It was evident, she thought, that Miss Wormsley liked to vex her.

It was one morning, about a week after Farmer Goodwin's visit, that Honor, who, had remained up-stairs after Miss Wormsley to

make the beds, while the latter got the breakfast, on coming down, saw the parlour-door standing a little ajar, with the key on the outside. The thought struck her that she might take advantage of the unwonted opportunity, run in, and see the aquarium. Her hand was on the door, when she suddenly remembered it was not right. And yet she thought it could do no harm, and "who would know?" But this latter argument brought her to her senses. "God will know," she said to herself, and, after a short momentary struggle, she hurried away from the scene of temptation, lest another minute should have made it too strong for her.

After breakfast, Miss Wormsley sent her to dust the school-room. While she was thus engaged, many of the boys and girls arrived, for Miss Wormsley had been very careful to enforce punctuality. She had not, however, finished her task—had not, indeed, been engaged with it more than a few minutes,

when Miss Wormsley suddenly arrived, with a countenance in which consternation and anger were equally depicted. At first she seemed hardly able to speak, and when she did, her tone had lost somewhat of its habitual self-command.

“Some one,” she said, and her voice trembled, and a tear, in spite of herself, started to her eyes, “some one has thrown down the aquarium and broken it in pieces.”

Miss Wormsley’s consternation spread to her pupils. If the Crystal Palace, which then did not exist, were to be broken to pieces in a single night, it could not create greater dismay than did the fracture of the aquarium in Derringham school. Amazement and affright were painted on every countenance, and most of all on Honor’s, for she best could sympathize with the whole extent of the mischief, and, remembering how angry she had felt with Miss Wormsley, and how, in her anger, she had almost wished Miss Hurst had never

made the present, her sympathy was increased by a slight feeling of remorse, and she exclaimed, eagerly :—

“ Oh ! I am so sorry ! What can have done it ? ”

“ *What* can have done ! ” cried Miss Wormsley, turning towards her with sparkling eyes — “ *who* can have done it, you mean ! It cannot have been done without hands ; and it is my belief it was done through malice ! ”


And she looked at Honor. But Honor’s countenance maintained its usual artlessness and openness of expression. Miss Wormsley’s meaning did not once cross her mind, and she answered :—

“ Surely no one could have been so wicked ! ”

“ The thing is there to speak for itself.”

“ Might not a cat—” began Honor.

“ Stuff !—childish ! I will have no such foolish excuses ! I am not a baby, to be blinded in that way ! ”



"I saw the door open this morning," said Honor, "when I came down-stairs, and I thought, perhaps, Neighbour Green's grey cat—"

"You saw the door *open*, did you say, when you came down-stairs this morning? I know the key was in it, because I had been in before you were up to get some worsted and knitting-needles; but I know I turned the key in the door, as well as fastened it, therefore you could not have seen it open."

Honor stood with unfeigned amazement, but answered promptly and decidedly:—

"I am certain it was open when I came down-stairs."

"I tell you it could not be, for I locked it."

"Some one must have opened it then."

"There was no one in the house but yourself, Honor Sky. I am sorry to say proofs are very strong against you."

"Against me!" Honor exclaimed, the

dreadful idea, for the first time, striking herself, and then crying out with all the amazement of conscious innocence:—"Oh, Miss Wormsley! I am sure you cannot suspect me of anything so wicked!—oh, say you cannot, Miss Wormsley!"

"Some one must have done it. I must suspect some one of having been so wicked!—and why not you as well as any one else? You were the most eager to see it, and you were very angry and disrespectful when I refused you."

"Oh! but I would not have broken it for the world—not for the whole world! Oh! it is so different!"

"I condemn no one unheard," said Miss Wormsley; "but, I cannot help repeating, circumstances are very strong against you, as there has been no one else in the house. If you are proved to be guilty, you are, of course, unfit for the situation you hold, and I must get Mr. St. John to remove you."

“But it is impossible to prove I am guilty!” cried Honor, passionately, “for I am not. It can never be proved!”

As she spoke, she trembled with indignation as well as distress.

“Your losing your temper is no proof of your innocence,” said Miss Wormsley, who had now, outwardly at least, regained her own composure.

Honor made no answer, but her heart sank with the idea that Miss Wormsley had pre-determined to find her guilty. She wondered if Miss Hurst would think so too; and this idea gave her infinite distress. That Mary Hurst should think her guilty of so dastardly and malicious a piece of revenge seemed unbearable. And then what would become of her? Mr. St. John, too, would despise her; and though she felt certain her aunt and Mrs. Gannaway would not doubt her innocence, yet they would be overwhelmed with grief on her account. The prospect altoge-

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ther was so frightful, that the poor girl felt quite bewildered. To attend to the ordinary routine of lessons seemed impossible. She could not command her attention for a single instant.

Miss Wormsley was not slow to notice this circumstance. With a far stronger body and less sensitive mind, Miss Wormsley had so commanded her feelings as to go on with the lessons as usual. As she often said, "if there was anything with which she had no patience, it was want of self-control," and she made no allowance either for Honor's extreme youth, or for her difference of temperament. She reprimanded her sharply in the face of the whole school, and poor Honor, unable to bear up any longer, burst into tears of shame and vexation. Many of the children looked sorry for her, for they all liked her. Sarah Jones alone went on with her task unmoved and calm, and Miss Wormsley praised her for her industry and attention. The three hours which



ensued were among the most miserable of Honor's life. At last, twelve o'clock arrived, and the school dispersed. Miss Wormsley and Honor were left alone.

The former rose, and without speaking, turned her back upon Honor, and left the room. The poor girl, burying her head in her hands, gave way to a paroxysm of tears. What was she to do? Would Miss Hurst believe in her guilt? The idea was too tremendous to be endured, and at that instant she could think of no other in all the world to comfort her but Mary only. With all the natural impetuosity of her age and disposition, she seized her bonnet, which hung on a peg in the school-room, and without asking Miss Wormsley's leave, tore along the road to the Hall, eager to tell herself the whole truth to Miss Hurst, and vindicate herself in her eyes, if possible. In an incredibly short time she arrived at the back gate leading to the Hall, but so exhausted and breathless, she



could hardly knock, or speak when her summons was answered. Miss Hurst was out, the cook thought ; she believed she had gone to take a walk, and was to return by the school. Honor burst into a flood of tears. There seemed to be no end to the disasters of the day. Kindly, the cook, the same woman who had received her on her first arrival at Derringham, asked her to come in, and pressed her to rest, but Honor would not stay. Sadly, but more slowly than she had come, she began to retrace her steps to the school-house. As she drew near, the agitation of her mind, if possible, increased. She feared to find Miss Hurst there. She feared to find Miss Wormsley alone. Her heart beat as if it would burst her bosom, and her face burnt like fire. She hardly knew whether to advance or to hide herself till Miss Hurst should appear. But she thought, perhaps, after all, her patroness might not have come, and then what should she do ? She was yet in this dilemma

and the doubt caused by it, when the door opened, and Miss Hurst and Miss Wormsley issued forth. Honor's first impulse was to hide, and she shrunk behind the garden gate. Then remembering that she was innocent, she returned, and walked towards Miss Hurst.

Mary's lovely face looked vexed and puzzled. Miss Wormsley's aspect was injured and severe. Now that she had fairly made the first effort, Honor recovered her composure, and advanced steadily to meet them. As she approached Miss Hurst, she dropped a low curtsy.

"Honor," began Mary, not without kindness, for it was impossible for Mary Hurst to be harsh; but very sadly, almost as if she could have cried, "I am extremely sorry to hear that one of whom I have had so high an opinion should have behaved so ill, I am afraid I must say wickedly, as you have done. Let me hear you say you are sorry

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for it, and I will intercede with Miss Wormsley to pardon you."

Honor stood aghast to find her guilt thus taken for granted. It seemed as if her last prop had failed her. For a moment she was quite overpowered. Miss Hurst and Miss Wormsley both took her confusion for shame. It was, however, but for a moment; for, seizing Miss Hurst's dress, she cried passionately :—

"Indeed, Miss Hurst, I never broke the glass—God *knows* I never did. I never saw it. It is wicked to say I did, for I did not."

"No one else could have done it Honor," said Mary, much shocked, but gently still; "there was no one else in the house."


"But some one else might have come in."

Miss Wormsley now broke silence in a severe and angry tone :—

"For shame, Honor Sky. To have behaved so wickedly is a great sin, but to endeavour

to throw the guilt on another, is still more shocking. I am afraid, as indeed I have always suspected, you are a thoroughly naughty and deceitful girl."

Honor answered nothing, but with an indignation she could not repress, only eyed Miss Wormsley while she spoke, and when she had finished, turned her gaze anxiously towards Miss Hurst. Mary Hurst, as I have often said, was very good, very conscientious, and very sensible in the common things of life; but she had not a very strong or original mind, or much independence of judgment; she was not of those who guide, but of those who are guided. She had been early prepossessed in Honor's favour by Mr. St. John, a prepossession which had been confirmed and strengthened by the attractive character of the girl herself, and which had withstood hitherto the evident prejudice of Miss Wormsley, whom Mary, perhaps, rather esteemed than liked. Now, however, the case seemed



clear, and unwillingly enough, Mary could not forbear fearing that Miss Wormsley must be right. In reply to Honor's anxious glance, she said :—

“What Miss Wormsley says is quite true. I hope, Honor, you will think over this, and see your own wickedness. I am afraid you must leave the school, but if you repent and confess, I will not thrust you out friendless on the world.”

“But how can I confess what I have not—”

Miss Wormsley interrupted her :—

“Go into the house instantly, and tell no more falsehoods. They will serve you no more with Miss Hurst than they have done with me, and remember if you do not confess your guilt, you will be turned out to work for yourself as you deserve.”

Honor bounded back to the house in an agony indescribable. She could only throw herself on her knees and pray wildly, “Oh, God help me!”

During all that day, and for two or three succeeding, she was, by Miss Hurst's desire, confined to her own room. It was a terrible time for the poor girl, and when she thought she should be turned out homeless and friendless, without a roof to cover her, or a morsel to put in her mouth, and when she thought of the distress of her Aunt Keziah, she was beset by a strong temptation to plead guilty to the fault she had not committed. Then with eagerness, and as a shield to come between her and the wicked thought which her extreme misery would suggest, she recalled the precious advice of the strange gentleman, "Look upward, and then you will always go right. Trust in God, and pray to him, and He will never fail you;" and again her courage rose, for, though but a child, there was in her the true spirit of heroism, which is faith.

At last, on the second day of her confinement, a bold idea struck her. She would write to Mr. St. John. Surely, everybody

would not be unjust. Resolved to act openly, she begged Miss Wormsley to allow her pen and paper for the purpose. Miss Wormsley seemed inclined at first to refuse, but on second thoughts consented, on condition that she should see the letter. She also told Honor that Miss Hurst had already written to the same gentleman, and that she did not think her letter would avail her much. It was, however, Honor's last earthly hope, and she resolved to try.

She began her letter with a simple statement of the occurrences of the eventful morning, written as distinctly as she was able, solemnly protesting her innocence. She finished thus :—"Please, sir, do me justice, or no one else will. I am but a poor little girl, and you are a great gentleman, but, oh, sir, I am innocent! Don't turn me out to beg, or I might be led into sin, and I am sure you would be sorry if you could have saved me. I have sometimes even thought, I have



been so miserable, of saying I broke the glass, but that would be very wicked, for I did not. Oh, sir! take pity on me and save me from being wicked."

When Miss Wormsley read this to Mary, she exclaimed, at the conclusion, "Little hypocrite!" Mary cried, and said:—

"I would give anything I possess to find she is innocent. Surely, she cannot be so very wicked."

Miss Wormsley shook her head, and Mary's hopes, which for a minute had been excited, sank again.

To the surprise of everybody, a few days after the despatch of this letter, and without giving any warning, Mr. St. John appeared at Derringham. He had first gone to the Hall, but finding Miss Hurst was at school, he had proceeded thither instantly. He was the first to speak, and, without exchanging the ordinary greetings even, commenced at once:—

"I received your letter, Miss Hurst; but

it was not yours which brought me here, but another I have had since. My conscience, as a man, would not permit me to resist such an appeal. Justice is due to all mankind, and more especially to the helpless."

"And it is due to me, too," said Miss Wormsley.

"You shall have it as far as I can give it. I have not pre-determined to find the child innocent, but if she be guilty, she must indeed be, for her years, an accomplished criminal. Her letter reads strangely like innocence, and has all the eloquence of truth. Call Honor Sky. I have much to do, and no time to lose. Let no child leave the school. We shall have a regular trial."

Honor was quickly led into the room by Miss Wormsley. She was pale and trembling—signs which Miss Wormsley construed into those of guilt; but when Mr. St. John remembered the suffering she had already undergone, and that her whole destiny lay in the

balance, he thought there were other causes sufficient to account for them. Honor stole a furtive glance at her judge, that she might, if possible, guess whether he were likely to be her friend. But from his countenance she could gather little. It was the same quick, observant, pleasant face it had ever seemed, but there was no peculiar pity or softness to be discerned in it.

“How do you do, Honor Sky?” he said. “There is a heavy charge brought against you, but you shall have the justice which is the due of everybody, and which, I am sure, none desire more earnestly than you should have than Miss Hurst and Miss Wormsley.”

“Oh, I do hope she may be innocent,” cried Mary, eagerly.

“I wish justice for *every* one,” Miss Wormsley said emphatically.

Mr. St. John then requested Miss Wormsley to state clearly all she knew of the accident. This she did, and also her reasons for

believing Honor to be guilty—reasons which were certainly plausible. He then turned to Honor and asked her what she had to say in reply, recommending her, if she were innocent, to tell all the truth.

She began in a broken voice and in a somewhat incoherent manner to give the same account she had given in the letter ; but as she proceeded, her accents became firmer, and her narrative more connected. She did, indeed, tell everything, how, when she came down, the door was not as usual locked, but a little ajar, though not so that she could see the glass vase. She told how earnestly she had often wished to see it, and how much she had been tempted then to go in, just to look at it, but how she had withstood the temptation, and gone on to breakfast in the kitchen, and had never again been out of Miss Wormsley's sight till she went to school to dust the benches, before the arrival of the pupils.

While she spoke Mr. St. John listened with

the deepest attention and interest, indeed he never took his eyes from her countenance. He made no comment, however, when she had finished, but turning to Miss Wormsley, asked if she was sure she had locked the door. Perhaps the lock might have slipped. She was certain she had locked it. She had left the key in the door. Moreover, she had remarked that the door was locked when she came down in the morning. Honor, as far as she could guess, had been about a quarter of an hour later than herself in coming down-stairs, at least in coming into the kitchen. Miss Wormsley was kindling the fire which Honor had laid over night, and boiling the tea-kettle. Honor was making the beds.

"It was then possible," Mr. St. John said, "that some one might have come into the house while they were so engaged, without their being aware of it."

Miss Wormsley allowed it was possible, but highly improbable.

Mr. St. John then, addressing all the pupils, who were all listening with apparently great interest, asked them if any of them had ever heard anyone express a wish to see the aquarium. Several exclaimed that they had all wished to see it.

“Had any of them expressed any particular wish?”

One boy stepped forward.

“Yes; Sarah Jones had said there were precious stones at the bottom, and she would like to get one to sell.”

Mr. St. John inquired if Sarah Jones were in the school. Miss Hurst looked round. She was present, but was sitting back, so that her face was screened by the child next to her.

Miss Wormsley called her forward. She obeyed, looking angry and sullen. Mr. St. John asked her if she had said what the boy had just repeated.

She denied it. “She had never said such a thing. How could she? She was not such

a fool as to think them stones were precious." But she was contradicted by half-a-dozen voices, all proclaiming that she had said so.

Still Mr. St. John's countenance did not change. His next inquiry was, if Sarah Jones had been early at school that morning. Miss Wormsley herself answered, eagerly :—

"No, she had been very late—unusually late—as she was generally very punctual. But on that morning she had been quite half an hour too late, and had given as her reason that her mother was washing, and she had to get her father's breakfast."

Mr. St. John then asked if any one had come to school with Sarah Jones?

All were silent. Mr. St. John next asked if any one had seen her that morning, previous to her coming to school.

Two children, a boy and a girl, now called out that just as they reached the school, they had met Sarah Jones running home, and that

she said she had forgotten her thimble, and that Miss Wormsley would be angry.

“This account,” said Mr. St. John, “does not quite agree with Jones’ statement to Miss Wormsley. I am afraid I must see Jones’ parents. Do they live far off?”

But ere any one could reply, the silence was disturbed by the noise of wheels, and a smart market-cart, to the surprise of all present, drew up at the door of the school-house, and the tap of a whip was heard at the door, which, being opened, disclosed the tall, stalwart figure and somewhat obstinate, though at the same time honest, face of Farmer Goodwin. His ruddy, sun-burnt cheek took a somewhat deeper hue as he became aware of the company amidst which he found himself.

“Mornin’ miss,” he said to Miss Wormsley. “I have brought you, on my way to market, a trifle of young potatoes and strawberries,



seeing as how you has none, and I has more than I knows what to do with, and I has a respect for you. I axe your pardon, sir. You be welcome, miss. Good mornin'. I didn't mean to intrude."

"Stay," cried Miss Hurst; "Sarah's father is a labourer on Mr. Goodwin's farm, but to be sure," she added, her countenance falling, "he cannot possibly know anything of this business."

"He can give us the character of the parents at any rate," said Mr. St. John. "Will you kindly give us your opinion, sir, of John Jones?"

"A good worker, sir, but a grumbling, discontented man, as obstinate as a mule, and not, I think, overmuch to be trusted. But may I make bold to ask," he said, seeing that Mr. St. John was again about to speak, "what be the cause of this here that I sees?"

As briefly as possible, Mr. St. John, seeing

that he was a sensible man, gave him an account of the business before him. Farmer Goodwin heard him attentively, and then gave utterance to a long—

“Whew! I’ll soon settle that affair,” he said. “No later than yesterday evening, the girl, Sarah Jones, brought me a stone she said she had found in the fields. She was a-weeding my gravel-walk, and asked me if it was not worth a great deal if she was to sell it. It was exactly a stone like that on the desk, and you say is missing. I told her, in course, it was not worth a doit, and chucked it out of the window, and there it lies in my yard yet, I dare be sworn.”

As the honest farmer concluded, all eyes were turned on Sarah Jones, who, with a guilty countenance, now sank on her knees and begged for mercy, protesting she only meant to look at the vase, and that she had upset it accidentally—that she would never do such a thing again, and that she thought

the stone was worth nothing—that if it had been valuable she meant to have given it back again to Miss Wormsley.”

Mr. St. John sternly interrupted her :—

“Not another word,” he said, “your guilt is sufficiently apparent. Even had curiosity, as you say, been your only fault, that does not excuse you for suffering an innocent girl to be condemned in your place.”

In the mean time Mary Hurst, in an ecstasy of delight, had clasped Honor Sky in her arms and told her how glad she was, and asked her to forgive her. Miss Wormsley, too, who had at first felt not a little mortified at the turn affairs had taken, but who was really too good and too just a woman to allow her pride to influence her against an honest conviction, now came forward and took Honor by the hand :—

“Honor Sky,” she said, “I fully acknowledge your innocence, and am only grieved to have caused you unjustly so much suffering.

But I know you now, and know that I can trust you. Do you forgive me?"

The happy Honor could only seize Miss Wormsley's hand, press it in both of her's and cry :—

"I am so happy! Oh, I am so happy!"

Mr. St. John looked at her kindly, and his bright eye seemed to glisten even more brightly than usual, and his tone, though cordial and cheerful as ever, was less quick, and, for him, solemn. "My little girl!" he said, "look in all difficulties and dangers where you have looked in this, for help and strength, and rest assured your life in this world will be noble and happy, and in the next, blessed and glorious for ever. God bless and keep you!"

Honor could not say "Thank you," for her heart was too full. She walked away to a table and began, absently, to arrange some slates which lay upon it. Mary Hurst was weeping. Miss Wormsley's countenance was agitated, and her eyes moist. Farmer Goodwin

brushed his face with the back of his hand. For a second, Mr. St. John's eyes followed Honor, then he turned to Miss Hurst and Miss Wormsley, and said :—

“ I reverence that child. She is one of the lowly who shall be exalted.”

No one responded, for no one could, and after a few seconds' pause, Mr. St. John continued, in his naturally nimble manner :—  
“ Now, good bye, or I shall lose the train.”

Miss Hurst accompanied him out of the school-house. Farmer Goodwin remained, twirling his hat. Miss Wormsley would have liked to invite him to sit down, but felt that it was her duty to go on with the routine of the school. At last he seemed to divine the difficulty in which she was placed, and said, “ Good bye.” But when he had reached the door, he turned back to say, somewhat bashfully :—“ If you want to go a-shopping, or to see the market any day, Miss Wormsley, you are welcome to the spring-cart. I should be

proud to drive you in, and the good little girl too." And, without waiting for an answer, he shut the door, leaving Miss Wormsley much pleased and surprised by his kindness.

## CHAPTER III.

HONOR was eighteen years old. She had been between four and five years at Derringham, and was now almost a woman. She had made great progress under the instructions of Miss Wormsley, and very proud the latter was of her pupil. From the memorable day of the trial, in which Mr. St. John had acted as judge, she had completely altered her conduct towards Honor, and was almost as kind to her as Miss Hurst was, and, except now and then a slight twinge, which she carefully concealed, had completely conquered her jealousy. Being a really conscientious and well-principled woman, she was shocked at the injustice and cruelty it had well-nigh led her to commit, and

when she had once fairly permitted herself to know Honor, she could not help loving her. She often said to Miss Hurst, "she did not believe there was a school in England, even in the large towns, that could turn out a better pupil-teacher." But the time had now arrived when Honor must quit Derringham, and go to finish her educational career at the training school. It was with mingled feelings of satisfaction and sorrow that she looked forward to this event, but the latter sentiment predominated. To leave Miss Hurst, and even Miss Wormsley, seemed a great calamity, and most likely never to be with them again a grief almost too great too be borne. She was sorry she was so nearly grown up, sorry almost that her education was so far advanced.

Miss Wormsley lamented her departure aloud. She was the only thoroughly satisfactory pupil she had ever had, and she feared much she should never have such another pupil-teacher. It tried her—she confessed—



almost tried her beyond what she could bear, to find that no sooner had a child got over the first troublesome steps, and instruction was beginning to become interesting, than its parents took it from school. "I declare," she cried, almost weeping with vexation and indignation, "it is no encouragement to be a good teacher, for the faster one brings them on, the sooner they are taken away, and it is only the same tiresome rudiments over and over again, and even they are soon forgotten. I have seen it for years. All this time Honor has been my comfort. She shows and proves to myself what I can do, and has kept up my heart in many an hour of despondency, when all my other labours seemed thrown away. And what am I to do when she is gone?"

Honor was much touched by this outburst in the severe, undemonstrative Miss Wormsley, in whose trials she fully sympathised. She threw her arms round her and thanked her for all her instructions and all her kindness, saying :—

“She had done good to her at any rate. She was her debtor for life.”

And Miss Wormsley wiped away the one tiny tear which stood in her eye, warmly returned Honor’s embrace, and answered, “That was her comfort;” from that day mistress and pupil were fast friends.

It was summer time, the end of the holidays, which had been fixed as the period for Honor to leave Derringham. She had been taking, one day, a long ramble alone on the beach beneath the rocks—the last, perhaps, she thought; and she had just turned the angle of a rock when she met Miss Hurst, who had apparently been taking the same walk, and was now returning homewards. She started when she saw Honor, and smiled, but Honor thought she saw tears in her eyes, and her cheek was somewhat pale. For some time Honor had fancied that Miss Hurst had daily become thinner and paler. She longed to know if she were ill, but she thought it would

be presumption to ask, so she only looked at her anxiously. It still seemed impossible to Honor that Mary Hurst could be unhappy, for was she not the most fortunate, as well as the best of human beings? Miss Hurst asked Honor to turn and walk back with her. Honor gladly complied. She felt it a great happiness to walk with Miss Hurst, and now that she was on the eve of leaving her, she clung to her society with tenfold eagerness, wondering anxiously if, in her future life, she should ever be blessed with it again.

But Miss Hurst and her humble friend did not appear to-day to feel their usual interest in each other's conversation. They walked on in silence. Honor grudged the precious minutes as they passed, but she did not like to commence the conversation, and, indeed, did not know how to do it. At last, after a silence of some duration, Miss Hurst spoke, but it was in an absent way, and Honor again fancied she saw tears in her eyes.

“There will be no sea at ——, Honor. I daresay you will sometimes think of it here.”

“Oh, Miss Hurst—constantly—always, and of your great, great kindness to me. I have been so happy—happier than I can ever hope to be again. I shall remember you to the end of my life, and live in the hope of seeing you again. You have been my best friend in the world. It seems so different with you, Miss Hurst. You have so many people to love you, and so much to make you happy, but I know you are too good to forget me.”

Mary did not speak, and when Honor looked at her, she was weeping.

“Dear, dear Miss Hurst,” cried Honor, “I am but a poor school-girl, but if I could do anything. Oh, I fear you are not well.”

Mary Hurst had sat down upon a low rock, and Honor now knelt on the sand by her side. Mary threw her arms round the neck of the young girl, and continued to weep copiously.

"You are not very ill," the latter repeated, anxiously and tenderly.

"Ill, dear Honor! I am not ill at all. Oh, I wish I were only ill."

Honor raised her honest, tender blue eyes to Mary's face, and read there a suffering far beyond what any mere bodily illness could have caused.

"Oh, dear, dear Miss Hurst! can *you* be unhappy? I thought you were so different. I would die for you, dear Miss Hurst, I would indeed."

"I am very unhappy. Perhaps it is wrong, dearest Honor. Oh, I fear I have little faith; but so many bitter trials!"

"Oh that I were old, and rich, and great, and powerful, and I would—"

"You could not help me, dearest Honor, if you were, any more than you can do now; but your kindness and your friendship do me some good. Honor, I think you have seen my brother Edward."

"Oh, yes, miss! and he seemed so like yourself."

"He has always been my dearest friend, and now he—oh, Honor! I shall lose my brother."

"Lose him, dear Miss Hurst?"

"Yes, I fear so. He is so ill. The doctors have ordered him to Spain for the winter. I shall go with him."

"Oh! but he will get better!" cried Honor, hopefully. "If they did not think he could be cured, they would not send him from home," she continued, arguing in the simple wisdom of her own common sense.

"And then, to leave poor papa and mamma, and they are in distress, too, about—about my brother William," she added, in a low tone. "And papa does not seem what he used to be; and then my own trial; and I am obliged to keep up for their sake."

"Your own trial!" Honor reiterated.

"Yes. You know, or perhaps you do not

know, that, for some years—nearly seven now—I have been engaged to a young clergyman, a friend of Edward's. He was ordained first to a curacy in the West of England, but, two years afterwards, it was decided he was to go abroad. A very promising field of exertion was opened to him quite unexpectedly in a distant colony, and he felt that the voice of God called him, and that he was not justified in remaining at home. It is not, however, Honor, as a missionary to the heathen he has gone, so much as to the emigrants, those worse heathen, who, among savage nations, make the name of Christian a term of reproach and fear. Near one of these places, where men risk their lives and their souls for gold, Frank has a school, where he preaches, too, on Sundays. He hopes he has done some good, he said, when he last wrote, but oh! Honor! I have not heard from him for half a year, and my heart seems almost broken!—and if I go to Spain, and then leaving papa and mamma!”

Honor listened with the deepest interest and sympathy. It was the first practical lesson she had ever received that trials and sorrows are not confined to the poor. She could, however, and did, say much to console Miss Hurst. Letters might have been miscarried, or her lover might have removed to another place, or even might be coming home, for his cure, owing to the circumstances, could only be a temporary one, depending on the continuance there of the persons he went to teach. Mr. Edward would get better in a milder climate; and again Honor reiterated her opinion that the doctors would never have sent him from home if they had not thought he would get better.

Mary admitted the force of these arguments, and even the mere unburdening of her griefs to another had done her good. She now rose from her seat, and they pursued their walk home together.

On their way, Mary talked of Honor and



her prospects, and the pleasure with which she looked forward to her one day being a school-mistress, as she was sure her heart was in the work, and how it had often been a day-dream of her own, when Frank Austen returned, and got a living, and they were married, to have Honor for their school-mistress, working heart and hand with them, teaching the ignorant the way to be useful and happy in this life, and blessed in the next.

Honor's eyes sparkled. She felt it would be bliss indeed.

"Ah!" she cried, "if we were only at Dredham!"

And so these two girls whiled the way homewards, and beguiled their sad thoughts by castles in the air, built, not as such edifices often are, out of mere selfishness and vain-glory, but formed of generous-hopes and noble aspirations.

They parted at the gate which led up to the Hall. Honor walked slowly back to

Miss Wormsley's. Amid all the deep concern she felt for Miss Hurst, and very deep and very sincere it was, she experienced a thrill of delight as she thought of the affection the latter had for her, and the confidence she had placed in her. She felt that she should quit Derringham with a lighter heart, and then, when Miss Hurst was married—for Honor would not admit the notion that Mr. Austen could be dead—how delightful was the prospect of being their schoolmistress! Life, in the eyes of Honor Sky, did not appear to have a brighter lot to bestow. How happy her Aunt Keziah and Mrs. Gannaway would be! and how nice to be able, when she could earn money of her own, to add to their scanty comforts and lessen their privations. And Mr. Edward would get better in Spain, and Mr. Hurst did not seem very ill—probably it was only anxiety on his son's account which made him look poorly. Honor could see everything only through the me-

dium of her own youthful and buoyant disposition.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of Miss Wormsley during the last few days of Honor's sojourn at Derringham. She appeared to have dropped, in a great measure, the distinction she had always hitherto carefully preserved, even when kindest, between governess and pupil, and detailed to Honor many of her experiences of life and teaching. Though possessed of a certificate, she could, however, give Honor no information with regard to life at —— Training-School, where the latter was now going. But she encouraged her when diffidence led her to fear that she might not be able to perform what was required of her.

“You need not fear, Honor. Common attention and industry, where there is no deficiency, are sure to succeed; but you are clever.”

“Am I?” said Honor, her eyes sparkling

with pleasure—"am I really, Miss Wormsley?"

"Did you not know that?" inquired the latter, who had no patience with affectation, and half suspected Honor of it now.

"I never thought much about it. I always liked so much to learn. It has only been a pleasure to me."

"But you must have known you got on better than the rest?"

"Oh yes, than the children here; but a training-school must be very different."

"I am not afraid of you, anywhere, Honor."

Honor fell into a reverie. She was thinking of Miss Hurst, and her brother, and her lover. She wondered if Miss Wormsley had ever heard of the latter, but could not enquire—as if she did not know, it might be betraying Miss Hurst's confidence. She had also a hardly-acknowledged consciousness that it would not do to let Miss Wormsley

suspect that she had more of Miss Hurst's confidence than she herself possessed. Miss Wormsley was in a chatty humour this afternoon. She asked Honor if she had seen Miss Hurst lately. Honor replied that she had seen her the previous day.

"Did she seem out of spirits?" Miss Wormsley next enquired.

"Very much," Honor replied, somewhat wondering at the question.

"Ah! poor thing!" said Miss Wormsley, "I daresay it is on account of her brother."

"Mr. Edward? Is he so very ill?"

"Ah, I did not mean Mr. Edward, but Mr. William, the young Squire."


"Is he ill too?" cried Honor, in consternation.

"No, not in his health, or at least, it is not that. They say he has got into debt and all sorts of scrapes—in short, that he is an absolute scapegrace, and that the old Squire and his lady are quite heart-broken."

Poor Honor's eyes opened wide with amazement and grief at this stupendous intelligence. That such sorrows as these, so gross, so degrading, could ever have come near Mary Hurst, had never once struck her even as a possibility. She longed and yearned to comfort her, and yet how could she? Here Mary had given her no confidence, for here was involved not only sorrow, but disgrace. And yet she felt this must have been her bitterest grief. She now asked Miss Wormsley what had become of the young Squire, and if he was coming home.

Miss Wormsley said she did not know; she did not think he was ill, but he was in debt, and she heard the old Squire was in great difficulties to raise money to pay it.

"And, Honor, dear," said Miss Wormsley, "it seems selfish to think of it at such a time, but I am much afraid the school will have a share in this misfortune."



Honor looked up. Her speaking countenance asked :—

“How?”

“My salary, you know,” said Miss Wormsley, “besides what we raise by the children’s pence, is paid jointly, in equal parts, by Mr. Hurst and Miss Hurst. What Miss Hurst gives, she partly saves from her allowance, and partly earns by the beautiful needlework she does, which she sends somewhere in London to be sold. Now, if Mr. Hurst is in difficulties on account of his son, and Mr. Edward ill too, what is to become of my salary?”

“And of you, dear Miss Wormsley,” cried Honor.

Miss Wormsley drew herself up slightly.

“For my part, Honor, recommended, as I am confident I should be, by Mr. St. John, Miss Hurst, and Mr. Law, there is no doubt, in a pecuniary point of view, I might be much better off than I am here, but having put my

hand to the plough, I do not wish to turn back. How I hate to give anything up!" she exclaimed, energetically. "If I have only enough to live upon," she continued, "I shall remain here, for I am just beginning to hope, in spite of all I said to you the other day, that a little good is done. It is very provoking. Ah, Honor! I see plainly there will never be such a thing as national education in England till the law provides in some way or other for the permanent support of our schools, and does not leave them to depend on individual charity, which cannot possibly be otherwise than uncertain at all times."

But we must now return to Derringham Hall.


Alone in her chamber sat Mrs. Hurst. It is some years since I last presented her to my readers, and these years had not sat lightly on her. Her matronly proportions had shrunk considerably. Pain and care had furrowed



her smooth forehead, and thinned and silvered the hair which shaded it, while sorrow and anxiety were expressed on the lines of her mouth and the upward glance of her eye.

A fond and a proud mother had Mrs. Hurst been, and of all her children, she had been fondest and proudest of William, her first-born son. To all her children she had been kind. All of them she loved, but not equally. William had been her favourite. Him she had indulged and spoilt, and now she began to reap the fruits of her selfishness. Not that even now she acknowledged it had been her doing. She felt only her son's guilt before his Maker, and his ingratitude to his father and herself. And alone where no one could see her, she poured out the deep anguish of her soul, beseeching God to have mercy on her; yet, in the pride of her heart, almost asking why he had thus smitten her.

In the meanwhile, Mary and her father, while the little girls were in the school-room, sat



awaiting the arrival of Edward. Mr. Hurst did not, like his wife, seek solitude, but was thankful for the consolation which, as yet, she refused. He sat in his easy-chair, and Mary by his side, holding his hand, while they listened anxiously for the sound of wheels. At last they were heard, and they came nearer and nearer.

“Shall I call mamma?” asked Mary.

Mr. Hurst hesitated, then he said:—

“Not till Edward comes.”

They had not long to wait. The carriage stopped at the door, and Mary and her father stood breathless on the threshold. In another instant Edward was in their arms. Both looked anxiously in his face, and then their eyes met. Edward was pale and thin, overworked, perhaps, but he did not look dying, and this opinion the father and daughter read in their mutual glance, and then took courage.

“My mother!” said Edward.

“In her own room,” said Mary.

“Poor thing! poor thing!” said Mr. Hurst,

"she suffers sadly ; I sometimes think, if I could see her better, I could bear all the rest, I hope your coming may do her good."

Edward sighed, and then he asked :—

"Will she not see me ?"

"Let us go to her room," said Mary.

"Do, do," cried Mr. Hurst, eagerly, "and God bless you both, my dear good children."

Mrs. Hurst was yet alone. For many days she had not left her own room, and though she never spoke unkindly to any one, she seemed indifferent to all. So engrossed was she with her own miserable thoughts, that she had not heard the sound of the carriage wheels, and the tap at the door had been repeated twice ere she heard it ; then she called :—

"Who wants me ?" as if annoyed by the intrusion.

"Dearest mother, it is I—your son."

"My son !" she cried, starting up ; then, in a different tone, a tone not unnoticed by

Edward, she repeated, "my son Edward! Come in."

She was standing to receive him when he entered. He took her hand and kissed it with reverent affection; then she clasped him in her arms, and burst into tears. Mary left them alone together.

Their interview was a very prolonged one. At last, to the extreme happiness of Mr. Hurst, they came down-stairs together, and for the first time for many days, Mrs. Hurst joined the family circle at dinner; Mr. Hurst looked almost happy.

"It will be all right," he said, "all right soon," and his naturally elastic spirits rose with the added comfort of the hour. But Mary felt less hopeful. Now that the excitement of his arrival was over, and the glow caused by it had faded, she could see that Edward looked exhausted and languid beyond what she had supposed at first. Mary longed for a conversation with him, that she might

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hear from him exactly how he felt, and that she might talk over with him this terrible affair which occupied them all, and other affairs which weighed heavily on herself.

It was in the twilight. Mr. Hurst sat in a remote corner of the old drawing-room, before a writing-table. He had been reading, or trying to read, a newspaper, but now the waning light furnished him with an excuse for laying it down, and he sat leaning on his elbow, in an attitude of thought and dejection, very unusual with him. He was still sitting in a reverie, when he felt a soft hand upon his shoulder and a warm breath upon his cheek. He turned round, thinking it was Mary, but it was his wife. Never, in the early days of his first love, had Mr. Hurst been more gratified by a mark of affection on the part of the woman who had always been first and dearest to him. Nervously and gratefully he turned round, while she whispered :—

“Forgive me, my dearest husband, my

misery has made me selfish, but you are always first to me. While I have you—" her voice dropped, for the tide of anguish seemed again to roll back upon her soul; but this time she mastered it. Her husband kissed her with passionate fondness, then he murmured, as if in blessing :—

"Our dear son, Edward."

At the word "son" Mrs. Hurst winced, but recovering quickly she said in a steady, though very low voice :—

"Edward is a good son; may God bless *him*."

The accent on the last word betrayed the bitterness of her soul, and in order to soften it, though it might be to add to her grief, Mr. Hurst said, though in a saddened tone :—

"How do you think Edward is looking?"

Mrs. Hurst started at the question as from a reverie. Though her strongest affection had turned to gall, it was her strongest

affection still ; her thoughts, her anxieties were still with the 'prodigal, and she answered :—

“ I thought he looked tired, but we were much engrossed by our conversation. I trust you do not think him very ill,” she said, with some alarm.

Edward and Mary, in the meantime, had noticed with heartfelt joy the commencement of this little scene. They trusted their mother was better, and they both knew the happiness it would give to the affectionate heart of their father. That they might not interrupt it, Edward drew Mary aside into the deep embrasure of the wide window I have already described in an earlier part of my narrative, and as the curtain which divided it from the rest of the room was partly drawn, they seemed almost in another apartment.

It was not a moonlight night, but the sea lay vast and still, and the tress rose soft and dark in the summer twilight.

Mary whispered to Edward :—

“ Would it not be pleasant on the lawn ? ”

“ Very pleasant, dearest Mary ; but a pleasure in which I cannot indulge. There must be no night air for me now, I am told.”

Mary looked up eagerly in his face, and into his eyes, then turned away, her heart sinking, not so much at his aspect physically, as at the rooted belief those eyes expressed.

“ We are to go abroad together,” she said.

“ Yes,” he said, “ the doctors recommend it, and it is my duty to try everything ; but, Mary dear, to speak the truth, I long to flee away and be at rest ; but God’s will be done. I trust, weak and miserable as I am, I may be permitted to say, living or dying I am the Lord’s.”

Poor Mary hid her face and wept. Edward



held her hand in both of his, pressing it tenderly. At last she said :—

“ I ought not to weep at hearing you speak so ; I know it is only selfishness, but what should I have left if you were gone. Kind and tender as are our dear father and mother, their own burden seems more than enough for them. I feel as if I had no one in the world.”

“ God, dearest Mary, is sufficient of Himself, but surely He has not left you without an earthly friend. Have you not Frank ? ”

But Mary's tears only flowed more rapidly.

“ Oh, Edward ! I have been so anxious, so miserably anxious, and in all this family sorrow I have been so selfish, for my own sometimes engrosses all my feelings.”

“ Poor Mary,” said Edward, kindly. Then, after a pause, he continued. “ My darling, you must remember that wherever Frank is, he is not alone or unwatched over.”

“ Oh, Edward ! I fancy sometimes my faith is something only caught from those I associate with, and nothing having any strong root in myself. I can look upwards when you or Frank are here to bid me do so, but when I am alone, all seems dark. Ah, Edward ! what do you think was my foolish castle in the air ? It was that Frank and I might have a nice country parish, with Honor Sky for our school-mistress. She would just suit Frank, I know, and cover all my deficiencies.”

“ And it may be yet, dearest. If God sees it fit for your good, it will be so. Perhaps He is now only fitting you for it, and if not, if not, darling, He will be all you want Himself, if you love Him and trust Him. This I know from experience,” he added, in a tone low with feeling.

As Edward spoke, past hopes, past ambitions, past affections crowded thick upon his memory, and while he still gave them a sigh, he was enabled to say :—

“All is best,” and to comfort and uphold his sister with a faith stronger than her own.

## CHAPTER IV.

I MUST again ask my reader to pass over a period of years, and again invite him to accompany me to the little town of Thornbury. But many changes had taken place there since the day on which the wandering village children had first entered it in quest of the education, which was to make their happiness.


Mr. Winthrop, the slow, the formal, the respectable, was no more, and his widow had withdrawn to a suburban cottage, at one end of Thornbury. Gentle, timid Mrs. Gannaway had vacated her department in the almshouse, to occupy one dark and narrow in the

churchyard hard by ; but Mrs. Keziah Sky, though long past the period when it is written that human life becomes "labour and sorrow," yet inhabited hers, though rumour whispered she was about to change her abode.

A successor had been appointed to Mr. Winthrop. The Vicarage was being painted and papered, and the whole town was on the tiptoe of expectation for the arrival of the new vicar. He had been there already two or three times, and several people had seen him. He was said to be a youngish man, but one who looked as if he had gone through a great many hardships. It was understood that he had been long abroad, but had returned chiefly on account of his health, and that Government had given him the living in recognition of his labours in the colonies. He was about to become a married man too, it was understood. In the meantime, great changes were already taking place in the parish. A new school-mistress, it was said,

was to come with Mr. and Mrs. Austen. Nay, it was even reported that this school-mistress was no other than a niece of Mrs. Keziah Sky, whom some persons remembered as having been at school in the time of old Mr. Gannaway. Mrs. Winthrop shook her head when she heard of this appointment, and doubted much if all these novelties would turn out well.

“New brooms sweep clean,” she said, “and as to that girl Sky, *Honor* Sky I think was her name, if I remember rightly, she was a very vain girl, very vain of her fine curls,—clever, certainly, but that class of people are not the better for cleverness. I cannot help thinking Mr. Austen would have done better to consult *me*, intimately acquainted as I am with the wants of the parish, but, of course, I am nobody now. I don’t mean, however, to allow myself to be treated as such. I shall be in no hurry to call on the new Mrs. Austen. One never knows what to believe, how-



ever ; so perhaps it is nonsense about Honor Sky."

The same afternoon on which Mrs. Winthrop gave utterance to the above, brought, however, a visit from Mrs. Keziah, who had made a great exertion to walk so far, and set the appointment of Honor Sky beyond a doubt. Poor Mrs. Keziah was much disappointed to see that Mrs. Winthrop was not so much pleased by it as she had expected her to be. She had fancied, in her simplicity, it would have been the very thing the latter would have liked, and did not guess that she would have liked nothing done by the Austens. Mrs. Winthrop had made up her mind that the Austens were to set themselves up in opposition to her and her late husband, and nothing short of their being subservient to her and her opinions in everything would have convinced her of the contrary.

"It was a very strange thing," she said, "that they should have engaged Honor Sky

as their school-mistress without asking her advice, as not only had the girl once been in her school, but she, of course, knew the requirements of Thornbury."

"Oh, ma'am," said poor Keziah, "but my niece have been for a long time in Mrs. Austen's school before she went to the training college. Mrs. Austen, please ma'am, was Miss Hurst, and she be so fond of Honor, ma'am. Honor be so fond of her. Honor says as how she be the dearest and best lady in the world."

"Of course; she is the new vicar's lady," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Keziah, puzzled, and not at all understanding Mrs. Winthrop's inuendo. She then began to tell her where Honor's house was to be, and how she was to live with her, in the simple confidence that her old patroness would be glad to hear what made her so happy. Much disappointed, however, was she to meet with no expression of sympathy.



Mrs. Winthrop "wished it might all turn out well, but, for her part, she always suspected all new-fangled ways."

Poor Mrs. Keziah turned to go home, hurt, disappointed. She had got as far as the door ere she remembered, in the pre-occupation of her mind, that she had brought a figure of Elijah as a present for Mrs. Winthrop. She now begged her acceptance of it, saying Mrs. Winthrop had been her greatest benefactress, and this was a slight token of her gratitude.

"It be my best, ma'am, I has ever done, it cost me a great deal of work, and my mind was on it for weeks; but if you will be pleased to accept it, ma'am, I shall think my time well spent."

Mrs. Winthrop's formal countenance brightened a little.

"Thank you, Mrs. Sky, you will be long before you find a better friend than I have been, let me tell you, whatever professions new comers may make. I wish you and your niece

well in your new house, but it does not do to be too sanguine about anything. This life is very uncertain."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Keziah, deferentially, "I knows that, ma'am, and I trust not to be uplifted ; I thanks God for the past happiness He have given me, and I trust to Him. My times are in His hand, and I blesses Him for it."

Even Mrs. Winthrop could not find fault with this. She only added, ominously :—

"All I say is, and I speak as a friend,—don't build yourself up in the certainty that it will all turn out so delightful as you think. It is a pity you have given up your almshouse. But in any difficulty, remember, you will always find me your friend."

The old woman curtsied her thanks and her farewell, and departed, feeling half-smothered by Mrs. Winthrop's wet blanket, yet conscientiously believing she owed her a debt of gratitude for it.

It was on an autumn evening that Frank Austen and his bride arrived at their new home. The woods round Thornbury were in the "sere and yellow leaf," the wild autumnal breeze rippled into tiny waves the little woodland lakelets, and rustled along the leaf-strewn paths. Yet the Vicarage garden was still gay with asters and holly-hocks, and the very lawn looked bright and trim even in the grey October twilight.

Frank's heart throbbed quick and strong, and Mary's fluttered like a caged bird. The moment which for twelve long years had been the heart's desire of both had arrived at last. The long waiting, the hope deferred, the sickening anxiety were over, and for the moment the fulness of joy was almost oppressive.

Yes, it was indeed twelve years since we last saw Frank Austen, and these years did not seem to have been all "summers." The seal of a hard, stern, working life was on his brow, and he looked twenty years older than

the fresh-hearted, ardent youth, whom I then introduced to my readers. And yet Frank Austen was fresh-hearted and ardent still. If thought, and care, and hardship had thinned and grizzled his youthful locks, and furrowed his boyish brows, they had only deepened his love for truth, and given method and steadiness to his zeal for teaching it. He was still almost as sanguine as ever. These twelve years had been spent among stirring and eventful scenes, and though not without their trials and disappointments, had also had their successes. Through them all Frank had looked to a home with Mary in England, and a life of endeavour together with her as the crown of all his efforts. There, he fancied that success would be easier, and labour pleasanter, than amid the wilder and more unsettled life to which he had hitherto been accustomed. It seemed to him that in a civilised and settled state of society like England, the ground must be already prepared, and that the

seed, carefully sown, could not fail, humanly speaking, of being productive of much fruit. He forgot that a lethargy of the feelings and affections may have its own difficulties, as well as the fever of strong passions and fiery desires. He forgot that perhaps the most unpromising state to be in, is to be neither "hot nor cold."

It was, therefore, with the highest hopes, coupled with the most fervent resolutions, that Frank Austen entered upon a new scene of life at Thornbury. The place, too, pleased him. The undulating country, the sweet wood-walks, the venerable church, the old-fashioned town, to outward seeming, so quiet and so secluded, charmed him. The pretty little Vicarage, too, with its trim lawn and its bright flowers set in a frame of dark shrubbery, seemed the very spot in which he would have chosen to spend his life with Mary. His heart was full to overflowing with thankfulness and hope, and as they stood at the window of their new

home, these were all communicated to Mary, who shared them fully, though in a more chastened and subdued manner.

Very different had been the life of Mary Hurst from that of her lover during the years which had parted them. The stir and adventure, which had marked alike the brighter and the darker days of his, had been almost utterly wanting in hers. Her destiny had been to bear silently and to wait patiently. She had had little to do to call forth much display of energy, or courage, or judgement, but she had had much to suffer in that monotony of sadness, in that renewal of a constant expectation, constantly disappointed, which wears, if it does not break, the heart.


Mary Hurst, my reader may remember, when he last parted from her, was on the eve of accompanying her second brother abroad. The history of their expedition is only too common a tale.

For a time Edward seemed to recover, and

returned to England apparently almost well. But, when another autumn came round, he drooped again, and again sought in a milder climate the safety which seemed denied to him at home. But this time the change was attended with no benefit. Once or twice the expiring flame of life flickered up, and deluded the anxious Mary with a momentary hope, but at last, and quite suddenly, it sank altogether, and poor Mary was left alone in a strange land with her dead brother.

Many, however, were kind and sympathising, and sad and sunken at heart though she was, feelings of gratitude to her fellow creatures, mingled with those to her Father in Heaven for the comfort He had given her, a comfort expressed in the lofty and touching words—the last ever spoken by her brother, and which were to her soul a very talisman of strength, “In the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection.”

And Mary was soon called upon again to test the consoling power of these words. She



had but passed from one death-bed to another. Her father was the next for whom the summons came, and then she had to console her mother—a hard task.

Never had Mrs. Hurst recovered from the heavy blow dealt by her eldest son's misconduct. Though, at the persuasion of her younger son, she had shaken off the engrossing anguish to which she had at first yielded, she had been from that time forth to all the world a colder, graver, sterner woman, with no sympathy for the petty affairs of life, no interest in its joys, and, though still punctiliously discharging its duties, entirely without the zest of old times. To Edward only, of all her children, did she ever demonstrate much affection. On him, in some measure, she appeared to have bestowed the fondness which had once been his brother's; but when he died, her family were astonished to find that no shade had apparently been added to the habitual gloom of her spirits. Once only did she speak of him as separated



from her—though she often quoted his opinions and recalled his actions. On that one occasion she said:—

“He is happy. Guilt and sorrow cannot touch him. I bless God for His goodness to my son Edward.”

Her husband's death she did not bear so well. Again she shut herself up within herself. From this state she was roused, this second time, by a new misfortune.

At Mr. Hurst's death his property was found to be virtually nothing, for of late years his family had been very expensive, and it was also discovered that all that remained of the entailed estate had been already mortgaged by his eldest son.

Mrs. Hurst's fortune, which had been settled upon herself, barely sufficed to maintain her and her remaining children, who were all daughters, in an economical gentility. They took up their abode near a cathedral town, where Mrs. Hurst had spent some time

during her youth, and there to Mary passed away the sad unvaried years till the day so long deferred arrived at last, and Frank returned.

So long unaccustomed to joyful emotions, happiness appeared to Mary almost incredible. Frank, the man, with his grizzled hair, and his sunburnt countenance, and his marked brows, was to her even a nobler and a handsomer being than when the chesnut locks curled bright and thick over his smooth, boyish forehead.

Nor was Frank disappointed, though he had left Mary a blooming girl of eighteen, and found her a pale and pensive woman of thirty. But her fond dark eyes, her sweet pale face, and her gentle bearing were full of a beauty which could not fade, and touched the heart of her lover with a sentiment far deeper and tenderer than the brightest bloom or the most unworn features ; for it told him of her love and her constancy, her suffering, and her endurance. He was happy in the thought that

it was his to console her for the past and to support and comfort her for the future. Mrs. Hurst received Frank with affection; but at first his coming seemed to increase the gloom which for years had been gathering thickly round her. By her younger daughters, now grown up, Mrs. Hurst was feared as much as she was loved; but Mary, who knew, or at least guessed, all she had suffered, could feel nothing for her but the tenderest compassion. She hoped that when Frank came home her mother might open her heart to him, and that he might supply to her the place of the sons she had lost. But in this hope she was disappointed. Kind she was to him—kind as to Mary herself—but her kindness was without confidence. Though she seemed anxious now to make amends for her former coldness to him—though, for the sake of the dead, to both of whom he had been dear—she displayed towards him even unusual marks of tenderness, he did not fill their place. Frank felt for her

the deepest commiseration, and remembered nothing now but what she had suffered, and he would have given much to have been able to comfort her. But hers was that silent, undemonstrative grief, which is the most corroding of all. Probably, too, it still partook of the nature of anxiety. For years she had not heard of her eldest son, over whose fate hung a dread uncertainty; and, though she never named him or alluded to him, Mary could not believe that she had really discarded him from her memory, and she could, in part, divine the mingling of incessant anxiety, yet dread, to know the worst, with those bitter memories and, perchance, self-reproachful reflections which she could hardly fail to have.

On the return of Edward Hurst from his first sojourn abroad, and during the brief interval of apparently renewed health, which had there been granted to him, he employed himself chiefly in prosecuting a search after his

lost brother. Edward had always been of opinion that his parents should not have so completely discarded him, and he guessed now that they repented having done so. He felt, too, that if he could live to reconcile them, and to re-open the door of hope for William, he should die happier. When he communicated his intention to his parents, they gave a silent assent, and none, perhaps, ever guessed how eager they were for his success. But they and he were alike doomed to disappointment. No trace was to be discovered of the poor castaway, and none could hope that the thick veil which had fallen over his fate concealed anything but what they would have trembled while they longed to know.

Thus happy though Mary was in her marriage with Frank, she could not leave her mother without a feeling that she was taking from her the greatest of her earthly consolations. And she thought of this, as, for the first time in her life, she and Frank sat down

by their own fireside, and began to talk over their mutual future.

"The school-mistress comes to-morrow, I believe," said Frank.

"To-night. Dear Honor! how glad I shall be to see her again! She is to come here to-morrow morning to make arrangements with us. It is four years since I saw her."

"She is one you have known long, dearest, I think you told me?"

"Since she was a little girl; and there is hardly anyone in the world of whom I have so high an opinion. I am sure we are most fortunate in securing her. Her history, in some respects, is rather singular."

But, at that moment, a servant entered the room for orders, and Frank did not hear Honor's history, which Mary was on the point of relating to him.

The next morning the weather proved still fine. Honor rose at an early hour, and tidily arranged the little cottage, which was now

her own. It was not the same cottage the Gannaways had, but another. It stood almost in the street, but had a small plot of ground in front, which at present was full of weeds, but Honor pictured it next summer full of flowers. The house was frugally but neatly furnished, and the little parlour was graced at one end by a small bookcase, the gift of Mrs. Goodwin, once Miss Wormsley. Having finished her morning work, Honor called her aunt, and they sat down to breakfast together. Mrs. Keziah was very happy. To have Honor to comfort and care for her in her old age seemed almost too much, and she was never weary of expressing her gratitude to God who had so blessed her. As she cast her eyes round the little room, she saw that Honor had adorned the chimney-piece with some of her birds and figures, while the boxes that contained the remainder of her treasures were arranged almost ornamentally in one corner. Mrs. Keziah leant

back in her chair, and gazed round with the pride of a great artist.

“Well, Honor,” she said, “I be but a poor old woman, but it be something to have made all these beautiful things. God forgive me if I be over proud, Honor,” she added, after a pause. “I be thinking of giving Mrs. Austen my best bird. Wouldn’t it be beautiful for her to put under a glass case in her drawing-room.”

Honor, who had not quite the same veneration for her aunt’s handiwork now as of old, did not feel certain of the appropriateness of the gift for such a purpose, and therefore she merely answered:—

“I would think it over before I made up my mind.”

“Well, to be sure, Honor, it be my best, but then Mrs. Austen be your best friend. I doesn’t see who else should have it. To be sure I might sell it, but I thinks I should like to *give* my best.”

As soon as breakfast was finished, Honor



wended her way to the Vicarage. As she went, she recalled to mind the first time she had gone thither, the doubt, the hope, the fear, which had oppressed her childish breast, and she thanked God for all that had passed since, and the happiness which He had given her now. How strange, she thought, that she should come back to the very same place in so different a position. These thoughts not unnaturally suggested the recollection of the one who had at that time been the companion of her trials and the partner of her hopes. It was many years since she had heard of Jim. As the reader knows, she had occasionally obtained intelligence of him from Mr. St. John ; but this gentleman himself she had not seen since she left Derringham, and she had lately heard, with the greatest regret, that he was an inspector no longer. Of Jim's fate, therefore, she knew nothing, and as she went along, she speculated upon it with the greatest interest.

Had he, too, become a teacher? Was he making his fortune, as he had always hoped to do? Or was he still living?

Honor felt she should much like to see him, or at least to hear of him again, and then she wondered if she ever should. These thoughts were still occupying her mind when she reached the Parsonage gate. It had been freshly painted, and perhaps from this circumstance she found the bolt by which it was fastened very difficult to draw back. She had tried for several minutes in vain, and despairing of accomplishing it herself, she looked round in the hope that she might obtain assistance from some passer-by. The only person to be seen at this early hour was a young man whom Honor did not feel quite certain whether or not to address as a gentleman.

"Please, sir!" she said, "if I am not taking a liberty, might I ask you to help me to open this gate?"

“Oh, certainly! if I can,” he said, in a careless but not uncivil tone. As he spoke, Honor now made up her mind he was probably a shopman, or a railway clerk. In his voice there was something which struck her as not unfamiliar, but she felt certain she could not have met him before.

He was a handsome young man, with raven hair and dark eyes, and a countenance expressive at once of daring and shrewdness, though not, perhaps a physiognomist would have thought, of much tenderness or openness; it was a face which seemed to bespeak power rather than goodness, and power perhaps rather circumscribed in its character. It was not, however, a wicked face; as to moral indications, its character was rather negative than positive.

As, having at last mastered the bolt, he turned to Honor, the face as well as the voice seemed not altogether unknown. He, too, appeared to be struck by something in her

appearance, for he regarded her scrutinisingly, yet without impertinence in his gaze.

Honor was not much changed, not more changed than the child become a woman must necessarily be. The injury at one time inflicted on her complexion by the small-pox was now quite effaced, and the little girl, whom Frank Austen had first seen learning a hymn in the churchyard of Dredham, had not a smoother skin or a clearer colour than the new school-mistress of Thornbury. She had still the same blue eyes, the same innocent, happy, intelligent countenance, the same animated, active manner. In figure she was now about the middle height, well and compactly made, while her dress was tidy, modest, and tasteful. Her eyes met those of her companion, and their mutual glance was instantaneously succeeded by another of mutual recognition.

“Honor Sky!” cried James Carver, “how

strange that I should meet you here ! Surely you are not living in Thornbury."

"Yes, I am, I have come here to be school-mistress," and Honor's tone betrayed a little of the honest pride she felt.

"School-mistress !" he repeated with a smile, "that does not lead to much. Are you quite contented with your situation ?"

Honor looked surprised at the question.

"Yes," she replied, and the fulness of content was in her tone ; then she asked in her turn :—

"And do you, too, live in Thornbury ?"

"For the present. I have a situation in the railway, but I hope to get something better soon. I have only a hundred a-year here, and that is but poor doings."

Again Honor opened wide her eyes. A hundred a-year seemed to her simple mind great affluence, if not unbounded wealth, and she wondered to hear Jim speak of it so slightly. She looked in his face to see if

he were not in jest ; but his countenance was grave and unmoved. For the moment Honor was a little impressed by the grandeur of her old companion's position, but it was only for the moment. Her truer sense of the noble and dignified came to her aid, and she felt intuitively, though somewhat confusedly, that it is not the 'emolument of a situation which constitutes its importance. She inquired if he had long held the situation.

"Not this situation, exactly. On finishing my time, at the training college, I declined being a teacher, but as I was very forward in my education, particularly in accounts, I succeeded, though with some difficulty, in obtaining a situation in a railway office. It was a very poor one to begin with ; but I knew I should get on."

"I believe," began Honor, sympathisingly, "that with industry and ability—"

Jim interrupted her :—

"Industry and ability are very good things,

as you say, Honor, and nothing to be done without them ; but there are other things," he added, significantly.

" Oh, yes ! integrity and disinterestedness, of course."

A faint smile, at Honor's simplicity, played round the small, firm, sarcastic mouth of James Carver, and he added :—

" Of course, of course, as you say, and as everybody says, but there is many an honest and industrious man gets no more than a bare livelihood. Depend upon it, Honor, there is nothing like a little knowledge of human nature for getting onwards."

" Well, I believe, James, it is a great thing. I always find in teaching that to understand the character of any child is half the battle. We cannot comfort or instruct any one without sympathy with them."

Again a scarcely perceptible smile moved the lips of James Carver, while his dark, piercing eyes were fixed for a moment with

keen inquiry on Honor's artless countenance. But she did not shrink from the gaze, indeed she was scarcely conscious of it. James made no rejoinder. He was engaged for the minute in pondering over the new phase in human nature to which he had just been introduced, and he could not quite understand it. It was so long since he had seen Honor that he had quite forgotten what a simpleton she was. He now bade her good morning, saying, rather patronisingly, that he would call on her. Unconscious of the patronage, because quite unconscious why there should be any occasion for patronage, she said frankly she should be glad to see him.

James walked on, thinking to himself what a nice-looking girl Honor Sky had grown. He had not thought of her, or remembered her, for a long time; but if there was any one for whom he had ever felt a regard, it was certainly Honor Sky, and now this old feeling returned.



“If,” said he to himself, “she had only on a silk dress and a smart bonnet, nobody would know her from a lady. She was always clever too. What in the world can make her such a simpleton!” The sound of a train passing at a little distance interrupted his speculations on the subject of Honor Sky, and turned his ideas in a contrary direction. He was soon absorbed in a profound reverie on the subject of the means by which he had lately been endeavouring to divert the traffic of the Swamp Counties Railway to that of the Great Eastland, by which company he was employed, and which from certain parts seemed equally, or at least nearly equally, advantageous. “It must answer, I think,” he said to himself, “and then my fortune is made.”

In the meantime, Honor had entered the Vicarage garden, almost forgetting even her old companion, in the prospect of seeing her beloved *Miss Hurst* once again, and that of being introduced to her husband—the Mr.

Austen of whom she had heard so much, and who had assumed, in her imagination, heroic proportions.

Honor Sky, on announcing her name, was shown into the study—the same apartment in which she had had her first interview with Mr. and Mrs. Winthrop. But she should hardly have recognised it now. The tasteful bookcases, the readable-looking books, the pretty morocco-covered table, and inviting chairs, though all inexpensive, formed a *tout ensemble* as different as possible from the dingy, formal, depressing apartment, with its grim green moreen curtains, its tall black bookcases, its pair of yellow smoke-begrimed globes, and its mezzotints of ancient and forgotten bishops in ebony frames, which had then met her gaze.

Mr. and Mrs. Austen did not keep the young school-mistress waiting long. In a minute Mary and Honor were in each other's arms, the latter sobbing for very joy.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, ma'am," she cried, "for giving way so, but this is the happiest day of my whole life."

"And almost of mine, too, dear Honor," Mary said, much more calmly, but with equal feeling; for a longer experience of life and its trials had much subdued the outward expression of her feelings. She had long been accustomed to feel and give no sign—no sign, at least, but that which such suppression permanently impresses on the countenance.

"But now," added Mrs. Austen, "I must present you to my husband."

Honor turned towards Frank Austen, who cordially shook her by the hand, saying he knew her well by name and character, and that he was glad now to make her acquaintance personally. Honor blushed with gratification at this speech, and made up her mind at once that the vicar was all that his betrothed had often so fondly painted him. As Honor's eyes rested for a moment on the manly figure, and

the fine, though somewhat toil-worn, features of her friend's husband, there came across her mind, like the faint reminiscence of a dream, the feeling that she had beheld him before. And yet how could that be? He had gone abroad sometime ere she came to Derringham, and it was impossible she could have seen him previously. So Honor put the idea aside, making up her mind that it was but one of those mysterious sensations which most persons occasionally experience, and which, at the moment they occur, make us feel almost as if that strange doctrine, which asserts the recurrence of all events in cycles, were not altogether false. But, though Honor, as I have said, rejected the notion that she could ever have seen Frank Austen before, it would continue to haunt and somewhat perplex her.

And now a long and animated discussion was begun with regard to schools in general, and Thornbury National School in particular. It was agreed it was to be opened on the following

Monday, and a system of discipline and instruction was decided upon.

Mary listened to her husband when he spoke, with admiring eyes and the fondest and firmest reliance. His words were to her as the words of an oracle. To Honor he was almost equally an object of admiration and reliance, yet, almost unconsciously to herself, she was not content with simple assent to his propositions.

She reasoned upon them and made suggestions of her own, which Mr. Austen felt were full of intelligence, and which he frankly adopted.

"What do you think of her, dearest?" asked Mary, anxiously, as soon as her former protégée was gone.

"I think her the very Phœnix of school-mistresses," he answered, laughing, and then added more seriously. "But indeed, my darling Mary, to confess the truth, she exceeds my expectations, for I have always made some

allowance for that golden mist through which your dear partial eyes behold everything they love. I expected an active, intelligent girl, but I was hardly prepared for the remarkable comprehensiveness of mind and the clearness of judgment displayed by this young person. There is an artlessness about her too, an utter absence of the consciousness of her own mental superiority which is very pleasing."

"I am so very glad you like her. Do you think her pretty?"


"Her countenance is one of those about which one hardly stops to ask if it is pretty, it is so full of mind and spirit. It is, in every sense of the word, such a healthy countenance—but yet, now you ask me, I think it is pretty."

Frank Austen was right. Honor Sky was pretty, though *pretty* was perhaps hardly the word to apply to her.

So far the world looked very bright to the new inhabitants of Thornbury. But—

## CHAPTER V.

DURING the course of the same morning in which Honor had paid her first visit to Mr. and Mrs. Austen, the new vicar was waited on separately by the parish clerk and the late vicar's churchwarden. The latter was a middle-aged man—a draper in the town, respectable and common-place in appearance, with a grave, obstinate, prejudiced-looking face. He had been a man after Mr. Winthrop's own heart, and now made rather a stiff obeisance to the new incumbent. The latter, however, accosted him in a very friendly manner, and began to enter into conversation



on the ordinary topics of the day. His cordiality was not without some effect in smoothing the asperities of his visitor, the furrows of whose grim visage somewhat relaxed, while his severe monosyllables were exchanged for sentences, though the manner of those was perhaps curt and ungracious. They then went on to talk of parish affairs—mostly of a practical nature, and agreed sufficiently well about tidying the church-yard, warming the church, and such matters. Mr. Austen then, thinking Mr. Grimsby was a respectable man and acquainted with the town, took the opportunity of asking him to recommend him some tradespeople.

“I have been told,” said Frank, “that a man of the name of Gunn is the best shoemaker.”

“He is a dissenter,” said Mr. Grimsby, as if the fact were decisive.

“But I am told he makes much the best shoes,” began Frank.



"May be, sir. I know nothing about his shoes, I am glad to say; but, of course, sir, no churchman would employ a dissenter."

"Why not, if his shoes are better than other people's?"

Mr. Grimsby stared.

"Why, sir, the dissenters never employ church people; they are a bad lot, sir—a vicious bad lot, and who have the church tradespeople to look to, sir, if the church people and the vicar were not to employ them?"

"But, perhaps, if we employed dissenters, the dissenters would in their turn employ our people."

"Not they, sir. They would only say our people had not good things, and that we could not do without them."

"Well, if they are animated by so bad a spirit, why should we not set them the example of a better?"

The idea expressed by Frank was altogether

so novel to the mind of Mr. Grimsby, that the latter remained silent for some seconds, as if making a violent attempt to comprehend so startling a proposition. At last he answered:—

“Well, sir! all I have to say is, you would affront all your best friends without gaining one of your enemies.”

“I had hoped, Mr. Grimsby, that, coming here as a perfect stranger, I could have no enemies, except, perhaps, those who might hate the messenger for the sake of the message. Parties I have nothing to do with, and it is my hope, as it shall be my endeavour, to conciliate all as far as I can, while adhering to what is right.”

“I am afraid, sir, if you don’t stick close to your party, you will get yourself into trouble.”

“It is not my business,” said Frank, “to think about getting myself into trouble, but to think how I may best serve my Master. I would, indeed, that we could heal the wounds

of God's church, and gather all his people into one fold outwardly, as I truly believe they are already one fold in spirit, but I cannot see how we can hope to do it if we treat one half of them as enemies. Perhaps if I make no distinction in my dealings on the score of sect, the dissenting ministers may do the same."

"Not they, sir. They hate the church people and want to pull them down, and even if they would do it, their congregations would not allow them. Now, for instance, there was the Baptist minister, on one occasion when there was a split of political parties, voted at a vestry meeting on what was considered Mr. Winthrop's side of the question, and the next day two of his hearers sent in their pew rents for the half year, with a message that they did not wish any longer to sit under a minister who had voted at a vestry for a Pink parson, for Mr. Winthrop was a Pink, and so are you, sir, are you not?"

“I have no politics.”

“I thought you had got the living, sir, from a Pink Government.”

“It was got for me by Lord ——, whom I knew abroad, and who was acquainted with my work there. He neither knew nor enquired my politics. I do not mean to say, Mr. Grimsby, that a layman should have no politics, nor even that some clergymen are not right in declaring theirs and acting on them; but I do mean to say that it is better when a parish minister does nothing to exclude himself from the confidence of any of his flock.”

“Well, sir, every man to his own way of thinking, but I am afraid you won't find it answer in Thornbury. It was the opinion of the late respected vicar, and I must say, sir, hoping no offence, I agree with him, that a man should stand by his own friends; it is what I call straightforward.”

“But your own friends, though they may be right in political matters, may possibly be

wrong in social or religious matters, as human nature is fallible."

"The Pinks are generally in the right, sir; all the respectable honest people are on that side. 'Stick by your friends' is my maxim, or how can you expect to have friends if you don't? The Purples, sir, you will find, are only a mean, humbugging lot."

As Mr. Grimsby finished speaking, he took up his hat, and he and Frank civilly wished each other good morning. Frank felt very much as if he had received a sudden shower-bath. The sunshine of the morning was beginning to grow dim.

In the meantime Mrs. Winthrop, who knew that Mr. Grimsby had been to see the new vicar, and who also found herself in immediate want of some reels of cotton, had waited with some impatience till she thought the churchwarden had had time to return to his shop, and now wended her way thither. Mr. Grimsby was delighted to see her, as he was bursting

with eagerness to express his opinion about the new vicar, and who so fit a person to communicate it to as Mrs. Winthrop? As soon, therefore, as he saw her enter the shop, he hastened to serve her. Having asked for her reels, and cleared her throat, she began :—

“You’ll not have seen the new vicar yet, I suppose, Mr. Grimsby?”

“Oh yes, ma’am, I have but just come from him.”

“Well, what do you think of him? How will he work?”

Mr. Grimsby’s grave, immovable countenance grew graver and more immovable. He did not answer at once, but merely shook his head slowly and significantly.

“I am very sorry—very sorry, indeed!” replied the late vicar’s widow, with emphatic lamentation in her manner; but could one have seen her heart, one might have beheld there a very lively spark of something strongly resembling satisfaction; and yet,

perhaps, Mrs. Winthrop believed she was sorry, for the human feelings are very complicated affairs. She then went on to say:—

“You know my deep interest in the welfare of this parish, Mr. Grimsby, and conscious how much that must always depend on the clergyman, you may imagine my anxiety to have particulars on which I can depend.”

“Would you mind, ma’am, just stepping into the parlour there behind the shop?”

“Not at all,” said Mrs. Winthrop, who had now completed her purchase, and whose curiosity was excited to a considerable pitch.

“You see, ma’am,” said Mr. Grimsby, as soon as they were seated, “the vicar, ma’am, is a young, or at least a youngish, man, and he has been out in Australia and those wild parts, and knows nothing of a parish. He is very wild, very wild indeed, in his notions. Only think of him proposing to deal with dissenters, and

saying he thought a vicar in a borough should have no politics ! ”

“ Dreadful, indeed ! ” said Mrs. Winthrop, with satisfied severity. “ He will find these new-fangled ways won’t answer. I hope you gave him some advice. ”

“ I did, ma’am, thinking it my duty, but I have small hope of his taking it, for he seems very prejudiced and obstinate. One can make nothing of obstinate people. ”

“ Ah ! ” ejaculated Mrs. Winthrop ; “ and Mrs. Austen—did you see her ? ”

“ No, ma’am—not except passing her in the hall—she seemed a quiet, pretty-looking young woman. ”

“ Hum ! ” Mrs. Winthrop said, severely. “ Very pretty and useless, I daresay. She’s the daughter, I believe, of some spend-thrift Suffolk Squire, and, I doubt not, considers herself very fine. I suppose my aid and advice won’t be wished for. Of course I am nobody now in the parish, she



thinks ; but I am not quite laid on the shelf yet, I hope. All I have to say, Mr. Grimsby, is, I hope matters may go on as well as they did in my time and my husband's. Good morning, Mr. Grimsby—I'm much obliged to you."

During the course of the morning, Frank found his study table inundated with notes—circulars from tradesmen, and notices to attend meetings and committees, burial-boards, charitable societies, *et cetera*.

At last, in despair, he carried them to Mary in the drawing-room.

"If I am to attend all these," he cried, "what is to become of all my time for visiting the sick and the poor, superintending the school, and carrying the gospel to the ignorant and the lost? How am I to have time to prepare sermons adapted to the wants and capacities of the persons among whom I am placed? So much secular labour, it seems to me, is quite outside the sphere of my duty. I will withdraw from it as much as possible."

Mary, of course, thought her husband quite right in this resolution ; but neither of them guessed how difficult it might be to put it in execution. Frank, seeing that his wife had her things on, enquired whither she was going. She informed him that all the morning she had had a levee of persons begging for relief ; women for blanket-tickets, and bread-tickets, and coal-tickets, and lying-in tickets ; women for gruel, and flannel, and rags ; women who had sons and husbands in the army and wanted information about them, and she was going out to see these persons at their own homes, and to make enquiries about them. Frank approved her resolution, and then suggested that probably the widow of the late vicar might be able to give her the information she desired. Mary, accordingly, made up her mind to call on Mrs. Winthrop. But first she went, as she intended, to the homes of these poor people.

Accustomed, as Mary had been, to live in

a simple agricultural parish, where she was personally acquainted with all the poor, and where extreme destitution was almost unknown, she was shocked and sickened by much that she saw. One woman in particular, who had just been confined, excited her deepest commiseration. The house was situated in a little narrow alley. As you entered it, a horrible smell saluted your nostrils. A broken stair-case ascended to the room inhabited by the miserable creature. The room itself, however, though poor in the extreme, was wonderfully tidy and clean. On a miserable bed, with only a threadbare and tattered blanket to cover her, lay the unfortunate woman, and beside her wailed the new-born infant. Several other children were on the floor, and another baby, a little more than a year old, lay asleep in a cradle, while a girl of about ten years of age seemed the only attendant of the mother. The father had died a few weeks previously of a fever. The

poor widow had now been very ill, and in great danger, and was so exhausted she was hardly able to speak ; but the little girl made Mary understand that they had been in great straits since "father" died, that they had sold all their clothes, that her mother had not even a change of linen, and, except one ragged night-gown, they had no clothes for the baby. Mary was filled with compassion, but ere she went to provide what assistance she could, she put some questions to the child. She found her intelligent, and, for a girl of her age, well instructed. The family had evidently been in the habit of going to church, and the children had been at school.

The little girl told Mary they had only lived where they now did since their father's death, that their mother was too poor to take a house anywhere else, that they were often very hungry, and that to-day they had had nothing to eat. As the child spoke, the sick


woman opened her dim, fainting eyes, and her pale lips parting, she tried to speak :—

“ We be dying of hunger and cold, lady. Have pity on the children.”

“ Indeed I will send you something at once,” said Mary, “ but I am not rich, and have so many claims on me, that I fear I cannot promise to maintain you long ; but I will try what I can do for you. Are there any charities in the parish to which I might apply for your benefit ? ”

Again the sick woman tried to speak ; but this time the effort was unsuccessful. A more deadly paleness overspread her exhausted features, and a cold sweat broke on her forehead. The little girl hung her head, but at last said :—

“ Yes, there was a charity—the Bundle Charity, they called it, and mother had applied to Mrs. Winthrop for a ticket, but Mrs. Winthrop would not let her have one, when she heard she went to Mr. Girdwood’s church.



"Your mother is a dissenter, then."

"Oh, no, ma'am. Mr. Girdwood, ma'am, be the vicar of Redhurst, and we used to live in his parish, and he have always been so good to us, and it is a'most a nearer walk than to Mr. Winthrop's, as was."

"There must surely be some mistake here, my poor girl. I will go to Mrs. Winthrop myself, and explain the matter."

"Thank you, ma'am," said the child, and "thank you," repeated the eyes of the poor mother, which unclosed again for an instant. The little girl continued:—

"Please, ma'am, Mrs. Winthrop said as how Mr. Girdwood did not preach right doctrine, I thinks she called it, and she only gave her tickets to her own flock. But, please, ma'am," said the little girl, apologetically, and as if she feared her present auditor might be of the same opinion as Mrs. Winthrop, "mother says as how she did not see any difference in their

preaching, except that Mr. Girdwood preached better."

As the girl finished speaking, the elder baby woke, and stood up in its crib. Its sister took it out and carried it in her arms to the side of the bed where the mother lay. The poor woman made an effort to look at it, and as she did so, it burst into a fit of baby laughter, seeming to fancy that she lay there for its amusement.

A feeling of the profoundest sadness struck to Mary's heart, and turning from the melancholy scene, she bent her steps instantly in the direction of Mrs. Winthrop's. That lady had just returned with her reels from Mr. Grimsby's, and was in the act of taking off her bonnet, when her maid came to announce to her that there was a lady in the parlour—"Mrs. Austen, ma'am."


"Mrs. Austen, did you say, Emma? Not the new vicar's wife, surely!"

"Yes, ma'am, I think it is, for I never saw

the lady before to my certain knowledge—a pretty, sweet-spoken lady, ma'am."

"Um!" said Mrs. Winthrop. "Fair and softly go far in a day. I wonder what she can want with me." But Mrs. Winthrop felt considerably flattered and a little mollified at the fact of Mary's visit, nevertheless.

On entering the room, however, she made only a stiff inclination. As she expressed it herself, she was resolved from the first to take her own standing, and not eat humble pie to the new vicar's lady. Mary, who had advanced cordially to meet her, and with her heart overflowing with the misery she had just beheld, and raised by the contemplation of it for the moment, not only far above the mere conventionalisms of life, but above her own nervous shyness, felt chilled and repulsed. But an instant's reflection served to remind her that Mrs. Winthrop could not be under the same influence, "and I have no doubt the sight of me reminds her of much sorrow, and





makes her feel awkward," thought the soft-hearted Mary. Full of this idea, she began in a gentle, affectionate manner, and with much more courage than was usual with her in addressing strangers :—

"I have taken the liberty of calling on you first, Mrs. Winthrop, feeling certain that my errand will excuse me, and trusting that you will give me, who am but inexperienced, the benefit of your knowledge of this parish."

Mrs. Winthrop's cross, resolute face relaxed a little, and she said, "she should be happy if *she* could help Mrs. Austen in any way, but she did not *presume* to suppose," *et cetera*.

Mary then plunged at once into a recital of the miseries she had just quitted, saying she had understood there was a society in the parish for relieving persons under such circumstances, and she was sure there could not be a more necessitous case. As she spoke, Mrs. Winthrop's face became more and more rigid and formal.

"Is the woman's name Hodgkins?" she asked.

"Yes ; Louisa Hodgkins, widow of Thomas Hodgkins."

"I don't like these Hodgkinses. They are a nasty, disagreeable set. They go, or at least they went, to Redhurst church instead of their own parish. I don't know what the world is coming to, when people in their station are to have opinions about sermons. Let them apply to Mr. Girdwood, since they belong to his flock."

"But," said Mary, in a tone of the mildest expostulation, and with the most conciliatory manner she could command, "the poor creature is now at the point of death. However she may have been mistaken, surely we cannot let her die."

"When you have had my experience, Mrs. Austen, you will know that these people are always dying when they want anything."

"But I assure you I saw this poor woman

myself, and I hoped that if you knew where I might get one of the tickets she mentioned, you would kindly tell me."


"I have nothing for anybody who goes to Mr. Girdwood's. Let him provide for his own flock."

"He is not at home, I believe. Is he so very objectionable a man?"


"Yes, he is. People have been very much disappointed in him. He has been very false."

"How? In what way?"

"He came here, making professions, which he has never carried out. He has declined taking part in various movements set afoot in the neighbourhood by pious persons, and gave for an excuse, that he did not wish to distract his mind from his parish duties by party strife of any kind. But it was a mere excuse. As if these were not days when we should attack the enemy on every side, and when it is every man's duty to stand firm by the right cause.



I have no opinion of a woman who forsakes a faithful ministry to listen to the preaching of hay, wood, and stubble," and Mrs. Winthrop had quite worked herself up into a passion, for, to tell the truth, with her mind full of what she had heard from Mr. Grimshy, she was speaking *at* Frank Austen quite as much as *of* Mr. Girdwood. The latter was a truly excellent man, fervent in spirit and pure in doctrine. Being of an ardent temper, he had, in early life, attached himself to a certain party in the church. The opinions of that party were still his, but experience had shown him that goodness did not lie entirely with those who thought like himself, and he also learned that the most important warfare the church militant has to maintain is, as of old, against the corruption, the selfishness, and the deceit of the human heart ; and so he resolved henceforth to know neither high nor low, but man the sinner and Christ the Saviour alone. He was a powerful preacher, and many of Mr.



Winthrop's hearers resorted to Redhurst, and after all, this perhaps it was, which was the head and front of his offence with Mrs. Winthrop.

"Can I not prevail upon you, then," said Mary, "to give this poor thing a ticket?"

"Certainly not, Mrs. Austen. It is quite contrary to my principles."


Mary felt inclined to ask what Mrs. Winthrop's principles were, and whether they were those of the priest and the Levite, or the good Samaritan. She longed to say something, but she was too diffident. She only coloured up and looked nervous, and she saw that Mrs. Winthrop fancied she had gained a victory. Altogether worried, and discomfited, she took leave.

"I settled her at once," said Mrs. Winthrop, in relating the visit afterwards to one of her cronies. "To come and insult me with asking my advice, when all the while she only wanted to cajole me out of a ticket. I sincerely hope

we may not see the parish in a pretty mess ere long."

Mary, in the meantime, had hastened home, which she had no sooner reached than she relieved her worried spirits by a burst of tears. She felt altogether disheartened, for poor Mary, timid and little hopeful by nature, was easily discouraged. She was found thus by her husband, who tenderly inquired what was the matter. She related the adventures of the morning, concluding :—

"Oh, Frank, I can, as you know, bear a great deal of anxiety and suffering, but I feel as if I were quite unequal to doing what I shall be called on to do here. I feel as if I could not strive with these strange people, who are so harsh to others, and seem so to misinterpret me. And I feel, too, as if I were so wrong in not saying what I know is right. I fear that here I shall not be the kind of person to help you best, and that makes me so miserable."



Frank strove to comfort his wife, and to strengthen her as well, and told her there must be trials, and they ought to be happy in being permitted to share them with one another. But, to tell the truth, the morning had not been a very promising one to him either. He had, however, far more courage, and more determination, than Mary, and, while he spoke to her, his spirits rose.

“Let us not, dearest love,” he said, “be of little faith. We may have embarked, perchance, on a stormy sea, but if the Lord is in our ship, we shall soon be on land.”

And Mary smiled through her tears, and hastily rising, she cried, “And that poor woman—I must get her something immediately. How selfish of me to have forgotten her, even for a minute!”

And away she ran to provide food and clothing, and medicine. She did not at that

time reflect that if she provided for all who applied for relief on an equally liberal scale, she should quickly exhaust their very limited income.




## CHAPTER VI.

ON the evening of the day after that on which Honor had had her first interview with Mr. and Mrs. Austen at the Vicarage, she and her aunt were preparing to sit down to tea, when a knock was heard at the door. Honor hastened to answer the summons, in some wonder as to who the visitor could be. It was with sincere pleasure she found herself greeted by James Carver.

"This is really kind of you," she said, "and aunt will be so glad to see you. I am so glad we have not had tea."

James was glad of it too, more glad than



of the prospect of meeting Mrs. Keziah, though his manner would have given any one exactly the contrary idea. On the whole, however, he was very glad he had come.

Honor's little parlour looked very comfortable. There was a bright tea-kettle singing on a blazing fire, and a bright gaslight over the tea-table, and the white tea-cups, and the bright metal tea-pot, the nice bread and butter, and Honor's blooming, happy face, presiding at the board, were all of the essence of comfort and cheerfulness. James had come rather prepared to despise Honor's home and its accompaniments, but he found it impossible, somehow, to do so. True, there was no finery, no handsome carpet, mirror, rosewood chairs, nor any appearance of that wealth and station which James' soul worshipped, but there was something wholesome, pleasant, and comfortable, which spoke even to his feelings, and contrasted favourably, though almost unconsciously in his mind, with his own genteel,

carpeted lodging and solitary cup of coffee. A spark of natural feeling warmed for the time his ambitious breast, and under the kindly influence he appeared in his best colours. He was very civil to Mrs. Keziah, and very cordial to Honor. The old lady was quite delighted with him, recalled the time when he and Honor—two little helpless children—had first come to her door, and thanked Heaven fervently, who had advanced them both so high in life. While she spoke, slowly, and with much circumlocution, as is often the case with the aged poor, James seemed a little impatient, then recovering himself, muttered:

“Well, it was the first step,” and, turning to Honor, tried to engage her in conversation, to put a stop to Mrs. Keziah’s reminiscences, which did not seem quite to please him. Honor was equally ready to talk and to listen, and the latter, perhaps, pleased James the best, for he liked an intelligent listener. He had plenty of information, and considerable


experience in many practical matters, and Honor was pleased to learn from him, while her remarks on what she heard were often both new and amusing. Without being able, perhaps, quite to appreciate either her or them, James was more interested than he had ever been before by anything or anyone not immediately relating to himself. The evening passed very quickly to all the party. Mrs. Keziah was delighted to see Honor so happy with her old friend, and their conversation appeared to her the wisest and the cleverest imaginable. She took a benevolent satisfaction in thinking what a treat it must be to James to have Honor to talk to, instead of sitting alone in his lodging. Honor herself was sincerely gratified that her old companion should still retain so friendly a feeling for her, and reproached herself for fancying he had forgotten her, while James' vanity was flattered by the belief that he had been conferring an honor as well as a pleasure by his visit. During

this second interview he had been still more struck with Honor's good looks than on the previous one, and James was not insensible to the value of external advantages of any kind, though, perhaps, he valued beauty as much for the consequence it gives its possessor as for any genuine admiration for it. It had its influence, however, even on him, and never had he felt that influence so much as to-night. James Carver was conscious, too, of his own personal attractions, and his was not a nature to undervalue any advantage which he himself possessed. He had often thought of these as a means of furthering his ambition, by enabling him, perhaps, to make an advantageous marriage. He had never yet, it is true, tried the effect of his attractions on the other sex, for fortune had never yet thrown him in the way of any woman whom he thought it worth while to win, and his character was not of the cast which makes love for pastime. Vain as he was, ambition was with him a much

stronger passion than vanity, and he knew that love-scrapes often stood in the way of a man's rise in the world, and, besides, they were a waste of time.

But now, when an opportunity occurred, he was glad to feel that he could please, and the pleasure he himself experienced at this perception was greater than he had expected, and even of a different character; he found himself led on, he knew not how, to be more entertaining than he had previously been aware he was capable of being; he tasted a pleasure unknown before, and as he met the answering glance of Honor's blue eye, at once so bright and soft, and read approbation in her kindling countenance, he experienced feelings which astonished himself—feelings of softness and humanity to which he had hitherto been a stranger.

“She is certainly very pretty,” he thought, “and very clever too;” and again the idea crossed him that Honor only wanted to be differ-



ently dressed to look like a lady, and he pictured her to himself sitting in a drawing-room, in a silk dress, with rings on her fingers, and flowers in her hair, and he felt that it was a very pretty picture. Never since James Carver was born had there been so much poetry in his feelings as to-night. He had been silent for a minute or two, occupied with the thoughts I have described, when he abruptly asked Honor :—

“Do you really, Honor, enjoy the prospect of being a school-mistress here, and teaching dirty, ragged children?”

“Really I do, James. But you know we were dirty, ragged children ourselves once, and if nobody had taught us, where should we have been now?”

“Dirty and ragged we were, Honor, but you know neither of us were like the children you will have to teach. We were anxious to learn, and not stupid.”

“But it is all the more necessary

to teach those who are stupid and careless."

James looked up. The notion seemed new to him. Honor continued :—

"I know it is difficult, and there is much toil and unpleasantness connected with it, for I have some experience of schools already; but the harder the work, the greater the pleasure of success. You cannot guess how happy I feel when I have vanquished some obstinate temper, or gained some inattentive ear. Napoleon could not have felt happier after Jena or Austerlitz."


She spoke with animation and energy, and James acknowledged to himself that her enthusiastic face was beautiful. He waited for her to go on, for it gave him an excuse for looking at her, and animation was very becoming to her.

"I heard Mr. Austen say last night that, under God, the school-room ought to be, and sometimes is, the regenerator of society, and



I have been thinking constantly ever since, and oh, I hope my thought has not been presumptuous, how I should like to make it so. If God should so answer my prayers and hopes, if He should so honour me, I should not then have lived in vain, and even if I should not succeed, it will be something to have been permitted to devote my life to so noble an aim, or if I have only taught one, perhaps that one may succeed where I have failed. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself came on earth as a humble teacher. He was crucified, and his disciples dispersed—but now—” and Honor stopped as if silenced by the vastness of the contemplation, and overpowered by her own feelings.

All were silent for a minute. James even was momentarily impressed, but his mind quickly regained its ordinary tone. Honor was almost the only person in the world, who, he would have felt certain under the circumstances, was no hypocrite. With a



mixture of curiosity and wonder, he now asked :—

“But should you not like to be a lady, Honor, and sit in your own drawing-room, and have as many books as you liked to read, and play on the piano, and travel about?”

The enthusiasm of her manner had passed for the present, but not its sweetness. She smiled, and answered gaily :—

“Should I not like to be Queen Victoria?”

“Nay; that does seem quite out of the question.”

“So does my being a lady, and sitting in my own drawing-room.”

“It is not impossible—nothing is.”

“No, not in one sense; but humanly speaking—”

“Humanly speaking—I always speak *humanly*, Honor, and I cannot see the impossibility.”

Honor laughed merrily :—

“ Well, James, I can, and I am glad of it ; I should be sorry if it were possible. It might disturb me in my work, which is now my pleasure.”

“ You are a strange girl, Honor. Good night — may I come back some other evening ? ”

“ Certainly,” Honor answered, with frank pleasure, while Mrs. Keziah added :—

“ Do, my dear ; how pleasant for us all it be to find you here ! I thank God humbly for it. You shall have one of my best birds the next time you comes.”

James thanked her carelessly, but catching Honor’s eye, he added, “ There was nothing he should like so much to have.”


“ What a simpleton Honor is ! ” he thought to himself, as he walked home—“ as great a simpleton as she used to be ! and yet how clever she is—how witty and lively, and how much she knows ! How strange it is she should

be such a simpleton, and yet I don't dislike it in her. In a man it would be insufferable, but I declare, in a woman, it is rather an improvement. It prevents her being proud, particularly if she is clever, and Honor is certainly very clever—as clever, cleverer than anybody else I ever met, in her own way.”

James Carver's old jealousy of Honor's talents had now entirely vanished. It was clear that, however considerable they might be, they were not of so available a description as his own, and, moreover, she did not appear to him now at all in the light of an object of jealousy. He thought of her all the way to his lodgings; but, arrived there, the sight of letters on his table at once turned the current of his ideas, and that night he lay awake some hours, not thinking of Honor Sky, but his busy and astute brain eagerly engaged in hatching clever schemes and making complicated calculations.

The information which that night's post

had brought him interested him so deeply, and seemed to him of so much importance, that for many evenings he did not return to Honor Sky's little cottage, and, indeed, so much was his mind engrossed, that she had almost for the time passed out of his memory. The letters I have alluded to contained the thanks of the Directors of the Great Eastland Railway for his services in having so greatly increased the traffic on their line, and for the zealous manner in which he had, in every respect, discharged the duties of the office to which they had appointed him. They offered him a new and superior situation in their employment, and one in which he would have a wider scope for exercising the talent and ingenuity he possessed. His salary was to be greatly raised at once, and to increase in proportion to the services he might render them. They wished him, however, to remain at Thornbury, as it was about the central part of their line, and therefore well adapted to the



work to which they had appointed him. James felt not a little elated by his success, yet he was not carried away by it. He proposed to himself much greater things than he had yet accomplished. This was only the first step, yet for that very reason it was all-important. He had fairly introduced the point of the wedge. Nothing was wanted now but energy and perseverance, combined with ordinary good fortune, and James Carver had abundant confidence both in his fortune and in his powers.

James Carver's visit had in the meantime made the most agreeable impression upon Honor Sky. After he left them, she and her Aunt Keziah talked about him for nearly half an hour, said how handsome he had grown, and how agreeable, and how kind and friendly it was of him to come to see them, and how they hoped he would come again soon, and how they would have muffins for tea if he did.

"It is a pity James was so ambitious," said Honor—"he was always so."

"I see nothing wrong in it, my dear," said Mrs. Keziah—"it be very natural, I thinks. Don't be hard on James, Honor dear. Does not you wish it yourself, too, my pet?"

"Yes, Aunt, I do—I do wish to get on, and to rise too, yet not, I think, in the same kind of way. It seems as if he did not quite enough look upwards, as if to get onwards was all he wanted, and as if he thought it depended entirely on—but perhaps I am hard on James," she added, fearing to have been severe, and feeling very kindly towards the companion of her childish troubles and adventures. But Honor had not much more time at present to think of James than he had to think of her.

In the beginning of the week succeeding that of his visit, her school was opened. Mr. and Mrs. Austen were both present. As the school had been closed for several weeks, the

attendance was not very numerous. But one day had not elapsed ere it was apparent to all there that a very difficult task was before them.

Thornbury school was now in a very different condition from what it had been when Honor knew it in the days of Mr. Ganaway. Then, though the knowledge and acquirements of the pupils were certainly at the very lowest ebb, a foundation of strict discipline had been laid, which Honor had fondly hoped, accompanied by a more interesting method of instruction, might have rendered success comparatively easy. But, to her surprise and disappointment, she found now a very altered state of matters. To an even greater ignorance than formerly, was now added an utter want of all system and government. The children talked and laughed with each other, fidgeted about perpetually, occasionally even stood upon the benches, corrected each other in a rude tone, and never,



for one instant, paid the smallest attention to the lesson they were engaged in. There appeared also, during the reign of the last mistress, to have been not the faintest approach to system in the arrangement of the classes. Children of various ages, and of various degrees of education—if that could be called degrees of education which might be more properly defined as degrees of ignorance—were placed in the same class; and Honor discovered that it had been the habit of the late mistress to be constantly transferring the children from one class to another. Here was, indeed, a pretty state of affairs!

The real fact was, that during the last few years of poor Mr. Winthrop's life, his health had been so infirm, that he had been under the necessity of having a curate. This left him nothing to spend on the school; and, though both he and Mrs. Winthrop exercised a praiseworthy frugality, they could not give as they had given. The consequence was,

that in the absence of any legal provision, it was found impossible to pay the salary of even a competent mistress; and as schools must do, at one period or another, where there is no provision for their maintenance from permanent sources, Thornbury school sank into the state in which it was found by Honor Sky.

Poor Mary's countenance became more and more blank and woeful. Since the day she had been at Mrs. Winthrop's, she had had a visit from that lady, who, among other things, had spoken of the school.

"The very best system," she said, "had been pursued, and she trusted Mr. Austen would continue it. The children, no doubt, were unruly, but, when she had gone down, she had always scolded them well, and turned off the worst-behaved; and she was sure it was the best way. She knew what would be the consequence of any change."

As Mrs. Winthrop had said all this in the


form of a threat, rather than of advice, poor Mary saw nothing but a mortal affront in venturing to disobey her, and a vista of perpetual quarreling opened up before her. Now Mary hated nothing so much as quarreling. Her gentle and timid spirit shrunk from it ; and quarreling with Mrs. Winthrop, the late vicar's widow, with whom she had resolved to be so friendly, seemed especially terrible. She feared people might think it her fault, and then it might do harm to Frank ; and had it not been before all the children, and for fear of distressing her husband, Mary could have sat down and wept.

Fortunately, Frank and Honor were not visited by any of these subjects for dread. Both of them saw the difficulties in which they were placed, but neither of them were dismayed. Frank was always sanguine, and it was his disposition rather to underrate than to magnify difficulties. Honor, both from her familiarity with schools and from being, per-

haps, less sanguine, estimated them more correctly ; but she had a dauntless resolution, and a love of the work which nothing could overcome—qualifications even more likely to be enduring than Frank's somewhat impatient zeal.

She now detailed to him what she wished to do—first, to classify her pupils according to their ages and attainments, then to reduce them to obedience, in which part of the task she claimed Mr. Austen's assistance, as, at first at least, they would mind him more than her. These preliminaries once adjusted, Honor next described her plan of instruction. Frank listened in great admiration. There was the inspiration of genius in all she said, and she was fortunate in having found one who could appreciate her.

“ I shall need a good many books, and some slates, and other things,—though,” she continued, doubtfully ; “ I am afraid they will cost some pounds.”



“Oh, but we must have them!” said Frank. “I will collect through the town for them, and, if I cannot get enough—which it will be strange if I do not—I will give the rest. Get them at once, Miss Sky, and I will pay for them in the meantime. I have several collections to make—one for the maintenance of the school itself, in which I may include this, and one for warming and re-seating the church. The pews are many of them very uncomfortable, and awkwardly placed for hearing. There is a good deal to do; but Mrs. Austen will, I dare say, assist me in making collections.”


Mary looked up with a face of blank dismay, but made no remark then. As they went home, she said :—

“Could not we do all these trifling things ourselves, dearest, without asking other people? I do not mind denying myself anything. Neither of us care for luxuries, dear—why not give them up at once? I can

make many little retrenchments in my dress. I know innumerable little ways of being economical."

Frank smiled affectionately. "I have no doubt, darling, you will do everything that is self-sacrificing, and I trust I shall strive to follow your example; nevertheless, I shall not be at the expense of these things myself—I mean to do no more than contribute my quota, unless I am forced. If it is a privilege, my dear Mary, and surely it is a great one, to be permitted to contribute to God's work in the world, we should not deprive others of the opportunity of giving their assistance. And if they are not aware that it is a privilege, is not our duty to arouse them to a knowledge of it?"

Mary could not deny that it was, but she wished heartily it was a duty which had devolved on any other rather than herself, and then she feared the wish was sinful.



## CHAPTER VII.

THE books and other apparatus were purchased and paid for by Frank, and Honor Sky went hard to work. Her progress was very slow—much slower than she had hoped ; still there was enough to encourage her, and Honor was not very easily discouraged. Several judicious acts of severity, coupled with a general firmness and kindness of manner, had been the means of reducing the school to a better state of discipline, while a more systematic arrangement had made teaching less difficult ; still it was terribly uphill work to arouse the attention of minds which scarcely knew the mean-

ing of the word, or to awaken the intellectual ambition of children, who had never in their lives felt even a desire to excel; still more difficult it was to make them feel their school duties part of that great duty which connects man with his Maker, and without which no duty can be performed in other than a perfunctory and selfish spirit. Then, when Honor hoped she had made some impression on some individual child, that child would suddenly be taken away for some days, and so interrupt the whole course of its progress. Its mother wanted it "to help with a washing," or "she could not afford the penny that week," or "she wanted it to run errands," and so the ground, so laboriously gained, was lost all at once. Where parents were so indifferent; where the home influence was so almost adverse, it was not to be wondered at that the children were lukewarm. In this state of matters, Frank thought the best plan would be to get Mary to go round to visit the parents,



and to try to induce them to keep their children more regularly at school. "Mary was so good and gentle, she was sure to prevail."

Mary set out with a beating heart, for her attempt at collecting had proved a total failure. She had returned home from the very first trial so agitated, frightened, disheartened, that Frank had comforted her by assuring her that she should never be asked again, and that he himself had found it much more disagreeable than he had expected. Yet she was mortified greatly by her failure, and very anxious to succeed in her new mission. Naturally diffident of her own powers, a terrible fear began to come over her, that she was not suited to the situation in which she was placed, and she was miserably anxious to prove to herself that she could do something.

She found the people generally, though not invariably, pleased to see her, which gave her some courage; still, they were very unlike the Derringham people, who, when she could not

induce them to do so from any better motive, were generally willing to send their children to please her. She was reminded now of her old visit to the cottage of Sarah Jones's parents. When she began to these people on the principal subject of her visit, their manner generally changed. Some got angry, and scolded, and declared it was all very well for a lady, who had everything done to her hand, to speak, that they were poor children, and must work and help to earn a morsel for themselves, and that "they did not see that education helped to put bread in their mouths;" others wept, and said, "they would like to have them out of the way for a few hours if they could afford it, but they had not the penny, or the child had not a decent frock, and they were ashamed to send it." All spoke as if they were doing her a personal favour in sending their children to school.

To the latter class of people the soft-hearted Mary promised pence and help; from the for-

mer she retreated in discomfiture, the greater that there was some truth in what they said. She related the result to her husband on her return, telling eagerly of those who had promised to return, and whose pence she was to pay.

“But Mary, dearest, if you pay for these children, I fear it will only encourage others to stay away, in the hope that you will do the same for them. I fear it may be encouraging the idle at the expense of the industrious.”

Mary's countenance fell. “I see,” she cried. “Oh, I am so stupid, and nervous, and useless. I used not to be so useless at Derringham, but it is so different here.” She felt almost in despair.

“Poor Mary! Dearest Mary!” said Frank, kindly and caressingly; but he looked grave, and could not conceal that he was sad. Perhaps for the moment, the same feeling that Mary had about herself had dawned on him also, but if it had, he repressed it instantly, as

wicked and ungrateful. Where could he have found so fond and so devoted a wife, one who bore with such cheerfulness every little privation, who so eagerly even denied herself. Frank himself was of a lavish and careless nature, and he felt that Mary's virtues were of the kind to supply his deficiencies, while he must do for her what she was too weak to do herself. Then he thought with much comfort of Honor Sky, and wondered if it would be asking her too much to take in hand the mission in which Mary had failed. He then turned to the latter, and said :—

“My best! my most precious! I must not send you again either to scold or beg. You shall only go to relieve the needy, and to comfort the sad, and who can do these so well as yourself? We must try and get Honor Sky to go to the parents. She will manage it. She is an admirable girl,” he added, warmly.

Mary could hardly restrain her tears, but she did till Frank was gone, and then she


wept unrestrainedly. She was desperately mortified by her failure, and her husband's tone of commendation, when he suggested Honor Sky as likely to succeed where she had failed, had added bitterness to the wound.

"Oh, he is so good," she thought, "and I am so unworthy of him. How wrong it is of me, when I am working for God, to have so much fear of man. I never thought that I should have been able to do so little for Frank. Even Honor Sky can do more for him than I can, and he knows it."

Poor Mary! She was one of those natures who are born to a weird of suffering,—intensely conscientious, exquisitely sensitive, and incapable of taking a large view of human life and its variety of capacities and duties.

It was not a difficult task to persuade Honor Sky to undertake the mission Mary had failed in. Her success in it, though far from complete, was much greater than that of Mrs. Austen had been, though she was with-

out the prestige of Mary's station. Perhaps one reason might be, that she was much more intimately acquainted, not only with the habits of thinking of the people in general, but their feelings on this subject in particular. But the chief reason was, that she had the courage and self-possession which Mary wanted. She was neither frightened nor flurried. She spoke firmly, but very cheerfully. She told those who were angry, and denied the benefits of education, that she had found it the greatest blessing and the greatest benefit; that she felt for them deeply in the present self-denial it laid on them, but she held out to them the hope of a rich reward, in the future of their children, both earthly and heavenly. She told them her own history, and that of James Carver, and many, who had not listened before, listened then, and she had the happiness of thinking she had made some impression. With the other class of recusants, those who professed themselves convinced of the benefits of



school, or at least desirous to be delivered for some hours from the care of their children, she entered into a discussion of ways and means, showed them where they might economise, inspected their dress, showed how it might be mended, and offered to cut out or help to plan. She went home with the happy consciousness that something had been effected, though in the end it turned out less than she had expected. The truths which Honor had been labouring to impress on others were so apparent to her own mind, that she fancied they only needed to be presented to other minds to effect conviction at once. Still, though a little disappointed, she was not disheartened, for her perseverance was indomitable, and her faith in the work she was doing, and the blessing which must consequently rest on it, not to be shaken.

Mary, in the meantime, was amazed at what appeared to her Honor's almost miraculous success. Though far too amiable to have

the least angry or unkind feeling towards her, the little school-mistress was, in one sense at least, the object of her envy, and each time that her husband praised Honor Sky sent a pang to Mary's heart — the origin of which she durst not ask herself.

Frank, in the meantime, had had his own disappointments. Instead of finding everybody, or, at least, all the respectable persons, willing to contribute their aid to what seemed to him objects so clearly conducive to the welfare of society, he had found it in general, though with some exceptions, exactly the contrary. He had been quite prepared for refusals to contribute to purely religious objects, because he was aware that it is only to the religious themselves that the advantage of these can be apparent, but he had fancied that all sensible and well-disposed persons must have been alive to the advantage of promoting schools.

But, to his surprise, he found a tolerably



large proportion of the respectable population of Thornbury actually hostile to education of any kind, while many of the remainder were profoundly indifferent. An exaggerated specimen of this class was among the first people he called upon. She was an old woman, living in a pretty cottage surrounded by a trim flower garden, in the outskirts of the town, a person not only in easy, but, for her station, wealthy circumstances. This old lady answered the door herself when he applied, but, seeing who it was, kept it ajar, with an evident determination to oppose his entrance, thus forcing him to state his errand then and there. Her reply, if it had no other merits, possessed, at least, those of decision and brevity.

“I never give nothing to nobody,” she said, and closed the door in his face; and poor Frank was forced to retreat in mingled discomfiture and amusement, the latter feeling, however, greatly predominating.

“There can be nobody else like Mrs. Greenfield,” he said to himself, encouragingly, and with another little explosion of mirth, though he was alone. And he certainly did not meet with another quite so frank in the enunciation of her opinions, though he quickly found that the spirit by which that lady was animated, was by no means an uncommon one.

“I shall give you five shillings, sir,” said a grocer, to whom he applied, “because you are a customer, and I don’t like to say no to the vicar of the parish, whose church I always attend, but I see no good of them schools except to make the boys saucier and more impudent than ever. And I don’t see why they should have as good an education as our boys; what right have they, I ask? They did very well without it; the world’s going to be turned upside down, I think.”

Another man would give nothing. “He did not see why he should pay for the education of other people’s children. He paid

for his own, why did not everybody else do the same?" and he was perfectly deaf to all Frank's appeals, alike to his reason, his feelings, or his conscience.

Mr. Grimsby was the next upon whom Frank called. He admitted at once, to Frank's great satisfaction, that every parish should have a school, though the latter was surprised to find how ignorant he was of why it should have it. Mr. Grimsby was a man who did not trouble himself much about reasons; precedent and prescription were sufficient authority for him. Still it was a great comfort to find even an unintelligent supporter. But though Mr. Grimsby had not reasons, he had opinions, which he put forth with didactic doggedness. Knowing Frank to be "wild," he was determined to take his stand at once.

"There ought certainly to be a school," he said, "where the children of the lower classes can be instructed in what befits their station.

They should learn reading and writing, and the few first sums in arithmetic, and the Church Catechism should be carefully taught."

"Certainly," said Frank, not thinking it absolutely necessary to state how much farther his own views of education went beyond the parrot routine recommended by Mr. Grimsby.

"Of course, sir," said Mr. Grimsby, in rather a pugnacious tone, "you will make a point of having the Church Catechism taught to all the children?"

"To all the Church children, certainly. But if, as I hope, I shall have some dissenting children at school, I shall not teach them the Catechism if their parents object.

"Then, sir," said Mr. Grimsby, "I am afraid I cannot support your school. It is against my principles to support a school where the Church is not upheld, and where dissenters are encouraged."

It was in vain that Frank argued and remonstrated. Mr. Grimsby was firm.

"People should stick by their friends and their principles," he said. "He did not like latitudinarians. And he would find that to make friends of the dissenters was impossible; and what had church people to do with educating their children? Let them have a school of their own."

The next person to whom Frank went was a dissenter, a surveyor, of the name of Willis. This man received him civilly, but with surprise and suspicion, as one might receive a messenger from a hostile camp.

Still more amazed did he seem when Frank announced the purport of his visit.

"What!" he said. Can the Church people not support their own school, but they must beg of dissenters?" and he laughed, and appeared quite tickled with the notion. He seemed to regard it in the light of a triumph for dissent, much in the way Mr. Grimsby had foretold.

Frank then strove to explain that he did

not wish to make his school an exclusive school. There was no other school of its class in the parish. Regarding himself as the moral and spiritual guardian of the whole parish, he could not bear the idea that any part of his flock were without education, and he hoped that he might be able to accommodate matters so that dissenters, having no objection to send their children to school, would also be willing to contribute their support, at least till they were able to establish a school of their own. He then described the accommodations he intended to make. The man continued to listen civilly and attentively—but answered, when he had concluded:—

“We dissenters have many claims on our purses which you Church people have not, so that our paying to support a Church school is quite out of the question. If poor dissenters send their children, why, of course, they must conform to your rules, and you have a right to make your own. Let every man labour in

his own vineyard. Who would have thought that the proud Church of England would have come to ask the dissenters for help? No offence, sir, I hope."

"No offence, certainly," said Mr. Austen; "but I wish I could have persuaded you to sacrifice something that the ignorant might be instructed."

Mr. Willis only smiled, maintaining the same civil, impracticable countenance. Frank asked if he might call on him again some other day?

"Oh, certainly, sir. Glad to see you, sir, But you'll not make a convert of me."

Such were specimens of the reception Frank generally met with. Others there were certainly much more favourable, and one or two were even generous and cordial, but, on the whole, the result of his efforts was far from encouraging. Frank, however, was not so easily disheartened as Mary. The ground had long lain fallow, and it would require repeated

actions of the plough before it could be expected to produce much.

The last person on whom Frank called for a subscription was James Carver. He had not thought of him till he was suggested by Honor Sky as a person likely to give.

James Carver had a lodging in the principal street in Thornbury. It was the evening when Frank called, and he was at home. His visitor found him in a very comfortable lodging-house parlour. He was seated in an easy-chair by the side of a blazing fire—the chair evidently his own property, as the luxury of its appearance was totally different in character from anything else in the apartment. Some coffee and muffins stood on a table near. A few rather good prints of celebrated actresses and beauties bore company curiously to likenesses of Hudson and Napoleon Bonaparte. James was himself attired in dressing-gown and slippers. He struck Frank as a handsome, sharp-looking young man, not vulgar in the



usual sense of the term, but, for his years, unusually business-like and worldly in aspect.

Shrewdness and observation, and an intense desire to rise, had with him in a measure supplied the absence of early education and habit, and with the exception perhaps of a little over-carefulness, the conventionalisms of what is called good society appeared to come quite easily to him.

He rose and welcomed Frank with what the latter at once felt was the respect due to him, and yet with a manner which asserted at once his own equality as a gentleman.

Having offered his guest a cup of coffee, which the latter accepted, they sat down together.

"I am sorry I have no wine," said James, apologetically; "but I do not drink it, as they say it obscures the working of the brain."

"I never drink it myself," said Frank; "because I cannot afford it."

James looked narrowly at him, half suspecting him of speaking to condescend or flatter, but convinced by the sight of his countenance that he spoke the truth, though the conviction was accompanied with a slight diminution of respect. James had rather a contempt for people—not who did not drink wine, but who could not afford to drink it.

“A clergyman’s is a beggarly profession, after all,” he thought; “I wonder what makes people respect it?”

Frank now opened the object of his visit. James answered at once:—

“I quite agree with you, sir. Education is the first thing for a man. It is what makes him a man, and this State has woefully neglected its duty to all its citizens in not providing for public instruction. Of course the majority are always fools, and will not learn, but all who wish to get on in the world should have it in their power.”

“ And we must do our best to supply the deficiencies of the State. You know the more we do for ourselves, the more the State will do for us,” Frank answered.

“ I am willing to contribute my share. Let a rate for education be imposed at once, and there is no tax I shall pay half so cheerfully. But I object to paying more than my share. It is not just.”

“ Perhaps not. But what would become of the world if charity and mercy did not exist as well as justice? Think of the pleasure of contributing to so good a work.”

“ That is all very well. But I am for all giving their share. I have no notion of being the pigeon. Pray, may I ask what you give yourself?”

“ All I cannot collect.”

“ Oh, then, you are collecting to save your own pocket?”

“ In one sense I am. But I am no more called on by justice to give my money

than you are, and I give all the trouble besides."

"Well, let them have a tax, and let them establish schools all over the country, just as they do Unions, or prisons."

"I hope they may some time or other, but they have many difficulties to contend with. One obstacle is the variety of sects."

"That is all nonsense. What has religion to do with education? Let the parents teach the children that at home, or the ministers at their Sunday-schools. What can religion possibly have to do with reading, writing, arithmetic, languages, and geography?"

"It may have everything to do," said Frank, "with the way in which all the work is done, for it alone supplies the motive which will enable anything to be done in the right spirit, and which affords a guarantee that learning will be employed for the interests of society, instead of against them. Godliness, you must remember, has the promise of this world as

well as the next. How can we teach honesty and truth, so that the lesson may be permanent, without religion? Religion is not a lesson, but the life of all lessons."

James listened civilly, but with an air which seemed to say :—

"You are a clergyman and paid to talk in that way, but I suspect you are too sensible a man to think so." He answered :—

"A clever, well-taught child will always know that honesty is the best policy, or find it out at last."

Frank felt himself color. He was much shocked at this display of irreligion, and its natural offspring, laxity of moral principle, in one so young as James Carver. He answered eagerly :—

"Honesty is not policy at all. Rely upon it, where honesty is only policy, some day it will fail."

"Not with a strong-minded man who can

take large views, and calculate chances on a wide scale."

"And do you view life in the light of a calculation of chances?"

"What is it, then, if it is not?"

"It is the unfolding of God's providence, and the key to man's future destiny."

Again James Carver's face wore the same incredulous expression, and this time his words corresponded.

"You are a clergyman, Mr. Austen, and the concerns of the next world are your especial charge. I am but a poor layman, and poor man of low origin, who have got to work my own way Onwards in life, and I find the business of this enough for me."

Amazed at so open an avowal of mammon-worship, Frank asked hurriedly, and on the first impulse of his astonishment:—

"Oh, Mr. Carver! are you an Atheist, that you can speak thus?"

"It does not signify what I am, Mr.

Austen. That is my own affair. Nobody has any right to say I am an Atheist. I often go to church."

Frank hardly knew how to reply. He had, in the course of his experience, met with many varieties of character; but he had never before been brought in so close contact with so utterly worldly and inscrutable a mind, and he found it very difficult to bring his own into that comprehension of it necessary to afford any medicine for its disease. James's cold, calculating, materialistic views were in direct opposition to the ardour, the human kindness and devotion even of Frank's natural character, and while he felt interested, he felt almost repelled. Anxious, however, to induce in him, if he could, better views and a higher ambition, he invited him to come to the Vicarage, and asked him if he would read some books that he should like to lend him.

James Carver's face, in spite of himself—

for he was still young—betrayed the pleasure he felt at the invitation, and with regard to reading the books, he said he should be happy to do so if he had time, but he had very little time for reading. Frank then rose to take leave, for the moment almost forgetting the purpose for which he had come ; but ere he had reached the door of the room he had remembered it. James Carver took out his purse and produced a sovereign.

“It’s quite contrary to my views,” he said, “to give more than other people, and doing so is, I fear, only retarding the time when a tax will be equally imposed upon us, and I give this chiefly out of regard for Miss Sky, who is an old friend of mine, and a very deserving young lady !” for he could not bring himself to speak of Honor as anything else than a young lady.

“Well !” he said to himself, as soon as Frank was gone, a “sovereign a year is a pretty good sum to give for the honour of visiting at



the Vicarage ; but the first step is always an important one, and of course he expected to be paid for his condescension. Parsons, as well as other folks, give nothing for nothing. And as to his books, I can look at them and pretend I have read them. It was stupid of me to let out my opinions. I wonder how I did it ? ”

Notwithstanding this mistake, however, and the loss of his sovereign, James remained in great satisfaction with the result of Frank's visit. After having paced up and down the room once or twice, occupied in such reflections as I have described, he drew from beneath the pillow of a sofa two volumes he had laid there for his evening perusal, one being a volume of Jeremy Bentham, the other a novel by Paul de Kock, and replacing them on his bookshelf, he took down Combe's Constitution of Man, and the translation of a German work, which he had just bought, on Progressive Development.


After having read for some time, he laid down his book, stirred the fire, and fell into a reverie, the first he had had for a long time, which bore no immediate reference to pounds shillings and pence, or their consequences, a high place in the world, and the possession of the pomps and luxuries of life. His thoughts were somewhat to the following effect :—

“Yes, no doubt mind is the product of brain, and its quality and power depend on quantity and fineness of organisation, and what more probable, or indeed so probable, as that this high form of organisation should be gradually produced. Do we not see a proof of it even in the progressive amelioration of races? And is there not as great a difference between Napoleon Bonaparte and a Bushman, as between a Bushman and an ourang-outang? What is stranger in it than that a man should return to the earth from which he first sprang, while his body becomes food to nourish other bodies, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

No, no, it is a good old proverb, 'a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' Give me this life and this world, and I will leave the chances of another to those who are fools enough to barter for it the substantial goods of this."


## CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN the excitement of his new appointment was over, and he had, as he thought, laid a train for further advancement, James Carver, feeling his evenings solitary, again betook himself to Honor Sky's cheerful little abode. Perhaps the reader may be surprised that James Carver had no acquaintances or associates; but the fact was, he had not only for a long time shunned forming any new ones, but he had carefully disembarrassed himself of the few he did possess. Resolved as he was to rise far above his present position, he was determined to form no con-



nections which might help to keep him down. His birth, he felt, was disadvantage enough. At first he had doubted the expediency even of cultivating his intimacy with Honor Sky ; but a little consideration made him decide that this might be turned to advantage, independent of the prompting of his own inclination. Like the great Napoleon, for whom James Carver had a greater veneration than for any other man who had ever lived, he was willing to indulge his feelings when they did not thwart his ambition, though he would have been as unsparing towards them as towards anything else if they had. But, be that as it may, each evening that he spent at Honor Sky's seemed more agreeable than the last. The charm he found in her conversation surprised himself, while it appeared to him that each time he saw her she became handsomer and more like a lady. He was even surprised to find how her conversation could interest him in things which had never

interested him before. Honor's old passion for knowing all about the other side of the sea had been satisfied as far as reading many books of travels could satisfy it; and when she threw the spell of her own imagination over descriptions of cold and mysterious northern scenes, where silence and twilight hold their solemn reign—or of glowing southern landscapes, gorgeous with colour and fragrant with perfume, when she spoke of frozen mountain-peaks, the sunless depths of mighty forests, or the calm of starlit oceans, glimpses dawned upon his soul of sources of pleasure till then unguessed of. Nay, even when she spoke of the histories and associations of these countries, when she alluded to their moral condition, and spoke of the labours of great men—not of those only whom the world calls great—but of the Unknown Great, who have braved exile, and hardship, and death, and obloquy, to carry to “lands benighted” the lamp of civilisation



and the pure daylight of Gospel truth—he felt, if not sympathy, something akin to it, at least for the moment, and even the worldly and carnal soul of the materialist felt, in spite of itself, the reality of spiritual influence.

“After all,” said James Carver to himself, “I like *women* to be religious, that is to say, when they don’t wear grim dresses and put on long faces. Honor looks so pretty when her face lights up in that way.”

In the meantime, he carefully concealed from her those opinions which he had partly betrayed to Frank Austen, not, to do him justice, that he feigned to think as she did ; but he kept silence, and it never entered into Honor’s simple mind to dream of opinions so wild, while Mr. Austen thought it better not to mention them to any one, hoping that he might be inclined to alter them, and unwilling to prejudice any one against him.

As James had expected, he was, shortly

after the vicar's visit, invited to tea at the Parsonage.

"We keep no company," said Frank, "so you will meet no one but Miss Sky; who is, I know, an old friend of yours, as she is of my wife's."


James was not quite pleased at the idea of meeting no one. He had hoped he might have met one or two of the professional people, or their families, as he was anxious, if possible, to obtain a footing among persons of a genteel class. At first even he was inclined to be offended that Honor Sky, the National School-mistress, should have been selected to meet him, and he wondered if the Austens really never had any company. A minute's reflection, however, convinced him that it would be absurd to take offence, and the notion of meeting Honor was in itself very agreeable. Moreover, it would afford him an opportunity, which he had rather wished for, of seeing how Honor looked, and



how she would conduct herself in a drawing-room.

She was there already when he arrived. In spite of himself, James Carver felt a little nervous, more especially at the idea of being presented to Mary, as it was the first time he had ever met a lady on equal terms. He had the good sense, however, to be aware that where any doubt is felt with regard to manners, the simplest and plainest are the best, so he merely bowed, though with some constraint and awkwardness. But her sweetness and good-breeding soon placed him at ease, and while she was getting tea, he began comparing Honor with her.


He had, at the first glance, been mortified to see that the former was dressed just as she was at home, but the perception that Mary's dress was almost equally plain, re-assured him. But, then, Mary had on a very handsome brooch, and on her finger a sparkling diamond ring, which he fancied made all the difference.



"Honor is certainly as pretty as Mrs. Austen," he thought, "prettier. I wonder how she would look in that ring and brooch. Her hand is not so smooth and white as Mrs. Austen's, but I suppose it would soon become so if she were to give up housework."

Pretty as Honor certainly was, James Carver was, however, mistaken in thinking her as pretty as Mrs. Austen. Mary, it is true, had not the bloom and the freshness of her more lowly-born friend, but her dark eyes, her raven hair, her pale, delicately-cut features, belonged to a higher and rarer style of beauty than Honor's fair Saxon face, the charm of which consisted chiefly in colour and intelligence.

Tea passed off rather heavily. No one seemed very well to know what to say. Frank's mind was busily occupied in thinking how he might best make an impression on that of his guest, but, as is often the case, the more he thought the more he seemed at fault. After the tea-things had been removed, the



conversation was just beginning to fall into what appeared a livelier and more favourable strain, when it was interrupted by the, at that hour, unusual sound of the door-bell.

“Some one ill, I fear,” said Frank.

But no—the servant came to say that Mrs. Winthrop wished to speak to Mrs. Austen, but would not come in, as she heard there was company. Mary accordingly went to see her. The widow of the late vicar looked wondrously sour and frost-bitten, and had a cold drop hanging at her nose.

“I beg your pardon for intruding on you, Mrs. Austen. I was not aware you had a party, but my time is often so much occupied in the day, I have only the evening for going out.”

“We have no party—only two young persons at tea, Miss Sky and an old friend of hers, a young man, who has a situation in the railway, of the name of Carver.”

"What! not James Carver, who used to be our errand-boy."

"Very likely, though I did not know it. Will you not come in?"

"Well, I am not in the habit of sitting down on equal terms with school-mistresses and errand-boys, but I should like to see James, who was always a respectable, steady, obedient lad. I always thought more of him than of Honor Sky. I am glad he is getting so well on."

And in her curiosity to see James in his new position, Mrs. Winthrop quite forgot the business which had brought her, the less wonderful that it was of no very important nature. Mrs. Winthrop found her evenings alone very tedious, as she did not care for reading anything but a newspaper; and being very fond of gossip, and full of curiosity, she generally spent the evening, when it did not actually rain or snow, in popping in upon her acquaintances. She had long had a strong

curiosity to peep into the domestic privacy of the new vicar, and, if possible, to make some discoveries with regard to Mrs. Austen's house-keeping, which, she was sure, must be extravagant. To find that she was to see Honor Sky and James Carver was an additional piece of good luck which she had not calculated upon.

Frank chafed in his spirit when he saw her enter. He had taken an insuperable dislike to her, which he could not subdue, ever since she had bullied poor Mary; and it was with some difficulty that he now forced himself to welcome her with civility—with cordiality was impossible. As for Honor, she was grievously disappointed, but, at the same time, a little amused at the general consternation, while James Carver swallowed an oath. Perhaps there was nobody in the world whom he would not rather have seen, and her manner now was not calculated to conciliate his feelings.

“Well, James,” she said, with some condescension, and without offering her hand, “I am glad to hear so good an account of you from Mrs. Austen. It shows you have been steady and industrious, though, I must say, I hardly expected to meet you here,” she said; “but Mr. Austen, I believe, is a republican in his notions.”

James coloured high with anger, and his dark eyes flashed proudly. He was only restrained from an angry reply by a beseeching glance from Honor and a sympathising one from Mary, which made her, from that moment, a favourite with him. Frank answered, a little warmly:—


“Not a republican—in truth, as long as a government is constitutional, and not absolute, it appears to me but of secondary consequence what form it assumes.

“May I ask, then, sir,” said James, “what your opinions are?”

Mrs. Winthrop’s eyes opened wide, but she

said nothing. Her face wore an expression of severity and horror, which almost made Frank laugh.

“ I would meet man as my brother, with kindness, sympathy, and politeness, in whatever sphere he may be. I have no wish whatever to abrogate the distinctions of class, for, in fact, they will always exist really, however they may be abolished nominally ; but I should wish to see not only the feeling of brotherhood exist among all classes, but the intercourse. There is no such bane to real civilisation as that unchristian and uncharitable spirit of exclusivism, so common in this country — a spirit which is founded to a great extent on the utterly artificial state of society in which we live, and the natural corruption of the human heart. If we could view—if the ‘ fitful fever ’ in which most men live would only permit us to view — worldly greatness and success as the mere accidents of life—if we could really believe—



‘The rank is but the guinea stamp,  
The man’s the gold for all that,’

we should neither envy any for their distinctions, nor despise others for their want of them. It is because we have not this grand feeling of eternal equality—because we place superiority or inferiority in temporary and visible distinctions—that we have envy on the one hand and contempt on the other. If I feel that I am eternally the equal of a great nobleman, I have no wish to drag him down to my level for the brief moment wherein it has pleased Providence to make our outward fortunes differ. If I feel that a chimney-sweep is my brother, I can have no other wish than that he should share every moral, intellectual, and spiritual advantage which I possess. I can have no other wish than to sympathise in his happiness, to relieve his sorrows, and to labour on by his side in the great work committed to us all. As for wealth and rank, they are given where God pleases, and He



pleases also that we should render to them a certain outward tribute, which those who estimate them at their true value will the most readily do. I do not mean, however, that they are of no value. Though insignificant as ends, they are great as means."

Frank spoke with all his natural warmth, while Honor's face glowed with responsive feeling. Mrs. Winthrop, after the first sentence or two, did not listen, but was confirmed in her opinion that the new vicar's views were "wild and dangerous—in fact, those of a Chartist"—a confirmation greatly strengthened by the fact of his having a school-mistress and an errand-boy, as she still chose to consider James, at tea. As for the latter, he had not heard much of the vicar's speech, his angry feelings had been so much excited by the preceding one of Mrs. Winthrop. He burned for the time when he should be above Mrs. Winthrop, and able to return with interest the contemptuous condescension she

now exhibited towards him. He said, coldly :—

“The same side of the wheel is not always at the top, and it has begun to turn round since I was here last.”

But Mrs. Winthrop's perceptions were far too blunt to comprehend his feelings, or even the meaning of his words, to which she had hardly attended ; and, moved by the spirit of curiosity and interference, she asked :—

“And what situation have you got in the railway—ticket-clerk, is it ? ”

Again James coloured angrily.

“I have a confidential situation in the goods department, with a very good income.”

“Oh, I am glad of that!—fifty pounds a year, I suppose.”

“This is rather too public an occasion,” he answered, “for confidence on such a subject as the precise amount of one's income, but I should hardly consider the sum you name as a sufficient one for a gentleman.” He laid an

emphasis on the word. "I suppose my income is as good as that of most clergymen, and I hope, ere long, it will be much better."

Frank, as well as James, could not avoid a feeling of satisfaction at the sight of the discomfiture which Mrs. Winthrop's face, immovable as it was, now displayed. She was quite silenced for the minute. When she next spoke it was in a tone of much greater respect:—


"Oh, I was not aware you had made such a rise. I wish you had let me know of it, considering the interest my late husband took in you; but he is not the vicar now, and so naturally you came to Mr. Austen instead—of course, my husband being dead, *I* had no right to expect any attention."

"I did not come to Mr. Austen," said James.  
"He came to me."

Mrs. Winthrop's indignation was now turned against Frank. She suspected him of a wish to win her adherents from her. In a very bad humour she took leave of the party, and went

away without taking the slightest notice of Honor Sky. But the comfort of the evening had been entirely interrupted, and the opportunity Frank longed for lost. He lent James Carver one or two books however, ere they parted for the night.

It was a dark winter night when Honor and James sallied forth, for the latter was to see the little school-mistress safe home. But though dark, it was fine, and, for the season, not cold. Honor's hand rested lightly on her companion's arm, and he felt the touch pleasant. Except on the morning of their meeting at the gate of the Vicarage, it was the first time that he and Honor had been alone together, for at their evening tea-drinkings, Aunt Keziah was always present. James had never felt so open or so communicative. Inspired partly by vanity and a wish to dazzle Honor, partly from a new-discovered want of sympathy, he confided to her the amount of his present income, and some of the grounds for



his future hopes. Honor listened with much interest. She was very glad indeed, and said so.

“You see, Honor, I may aspire to anything—even to a seat in parliament. Very soon my position will be quite as good as Mr. Austen’s.”

To this Honor made no immediate response, and James repeated it in an important tone. She answered, hesitatingly :—

“I don’t know much about those things, but—”

“Come, Honor, don’t be silly. You are not going to take a leaf out of Mrs. Winthrop’s book, and remind me I was an errand-boy. I am sure, if you knew, *you* need not be jealous of *me*.”

“Jealous, James! How can you think I am jealous? How can you be so unkind as to have such thoughts of me? Why should I be jealous of you?” she said, warmly, “or what cause have I given you to think so?”

“ Well, the world is so full of jealousy, that nobody is quite free from it, but I don’t want to offend you, Honor—you are the last person I should wish to offend.”

“ I am not offended, but did you hear what the vicar said to-night.”

“ No—and though the vicar is a good enough fellow, I don’t view him as the pope that you do,” he said, in a tone of pique.

“ I don’t view anybody as a pope that I am aware of, James, but I do respect the vicar. I know he is a good and a clever man; and he has far more experience than we can have, for he is much older. His kindness to me has been unbounded, and I feel I can never do enough to show my sense of it.”

“ I suppose,” James continued, in the same tone of pique, “ you could never think so much of anybody else as you do of the vicar.”

“ I never thought of the matter—yes, I think I could, if I were to meet anyone else as good, and as kind to me.”

"As kind to you—that goes for something with you then, Honor."

"Of course—how can you ask ? for a great deal."

"But even suppose a person were not, according to your notions, quite as good as the vicar, if he were kind to you and fond of you, would you like him ? "

"Yes, I think I should ;" then she added after a second or two's pause, "you know I like you, James."

There was something pleasant to James' ear in the words themselves, but taken with the conversation which had preceded them, they did not appear altogether flattering. He answered :—

"You know we have always been friends. Do you remember our old adventures, Honor?"


"Do I remember—I am sure I can never forget them. Oh, James, think what we are now, and how much we owe to God's good Providence."

“Yes—it does seem altogether, does it not, as if Fate, after so many years, had brought us together for some reason?”

“Yes,” said Honor, “all my best friends that ever I had seem now to be brought round me, and it is no doubt intended for good, that we may all help each other onwards.”

James sighed with impatience. Was it that Honor could not, or that she would not, understand him? He partly suspected the latter, yet, strange to say, even while somewhat angry with her, he felt more attracted to her. When they reached her door, and he had bid her good night, he walked home, musing on her good looks, her good temper, and her lively conversation. He had now got into the habit of thinking of Honor, as of something which especially belonged to himself.

Honor had returned from her evening's entertainment in a somewhat exalted frame of mind. She found her Aunt Keziah very tired and ready to go to bed. Honor, however, was





not tired, and she felt as if she could not sleep. When her aunt was gone she extinguished her light, and, sitting over the fire, fell into a reverie. As she sat, the glowing embers in her little grate appeared to vanish, and though she watched mechanically the flickering reflections, she saw them not. Like the slides in a magic lantern, the scenes of her past life glided before her. As a faintly-remembered dream came the memory of her happy infancy; then, like some horrible reminiscence of a nightmare, the miserable days in the old manor-house, chequered with the thought of the old dame-school. Then she recalled the expedition to the sea, which seemed to be the first incident that united her fate with Jim's, and she recalled the pleasant stranger, whose conversation had done so much to inspire her with a wish to see it. She had not thought of him for a long time, but in the silence and loneliness of the hour, she recalled vividly all that

had then passed, and began to consider how much of her future life, how much of her success, her hopefulness, and her perseverance had been owing to that conversation. And then came over her the old longing to see the young gentleman, and she wondered if she ever should ; she felt somehow as if she must. She had met James Carver again. She should meet him too. It appeared to her as if daily her old life and her new were more and more uniting, and then she wondered if she should ever again see Dredham, and over the red embers Honor Sky built a castle in the air. She fancied Frank Austen the Rector of Dredham, the church and the Rectory restored, the churchyard mown and swept, the Rectory garden full of flowers, a new school-house, in a garden, too, perhaps, and herself perchance helping to bring knowledge, industry, and piety into the homes of her old friends. In the very midst of the picture, she suddenly remembered James Carver, and felt that she

did not like to leave him out of all this happiness. But she was puzzled to find a place for him, besides having a lurking consciousness that he would not like to return to Dredham. The consideration of this difficulty roused her from her waking dream to the consciousness that it was more than time to retire to rest.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN the dusk of the short winter day, Mary sat alone in her little drawing-room—alone, at least, save the infant of two or three months old which lay on her knee. Changed as Mary had been in appearance even before she was married, she was still more changed now. Gentle and graceful as ever, her cheek was pale, and the languor of recent illness was in her eye, while her whole countenance bespoke anxiety of mind, if not depression of spirits. Yet, as she looked down on the little one in her lap, a smile spread itself over her careworn features. The baby was awake and lay quite

still, gazing up into its mother's face, as babies will, with eyes which seem so full of thought and wonder that one cannot help believing that they are, in their own way—like us all—endeavouring to solve the mighty problem of life. Profound is the mystery which lies involved in the mind of each speechless infant. And to a mother, the first conscious look, the first smile, the first spoken word, are like the faint early streaks of dawn breaking upon an unknown world—a world she has fondly pictured as full of beauty and happiness.

“What are you thinking of? I wonder,” thought Mary, as she gazed into her infant's eyes, deep-blue like those of its father; “are you wondering who I am, and do you think you love me?”

Such were the thoughts which had agreeably diverted Mary's mind from more painful subjects when her husband entered the room. Frank looked a little harassed and anxious too, but not so much as his wife; his dispo-

sition was naturally more buoyant and energetic.

“ I have been going over all the bills and accounts, dearest,” he said, “ and I do not see much to despair of. The school is behind, and the subscriptions do not cover, it is true, the expenses of the stoves and fuel ; I am also a little out of pocket for all the charities, besides the subscriptions, and I find we have rather exceeded in private alms what we can afford another year. But next year will not be so expensive. The first is always more expensive than any other. There will be no apparatus required for the school-room next year, and of course no stoves.”

“ But I fear each year,” said Mary, “ may bring its own particular expenses, besides the regular ones of every year ; and you know, if we are to have a family, they must be clothed, and fed, and educated. I hoped, small as our income was, we might have made it do, by dint of economy.”

“So it would have done, dearest, had we only had upon it the ordinary claims of charity which all have; but when one has twenty pounds a-year for a school, and five to supply deficiencies in one charity, and ten for another, besides innumerable accidental and trifling expenses, it soon mounts up.”

“But what are we to do, then?” she asked.

Frank mused anxiously :—

“We cannot give up the school,” he said, “for how else can we so well hope to benefit those whose moral and spiritual advancement we are set here to watch over; and yet it appears equally impossible to give up anything else, and the school, certainly, is out of all proportion to our means. But yet, oh Mary! Would I could see clearly what’s right. I pray that God may enlighten and help me.”

“Is there nothing we can give up ourselves?” said Mary, “for something must be done.”

“ We have given up wine already.”

“ We might give up sugar, and as soon as baby can walk, I shall dismiss the nurse.”

“ Dearest Mary, you have never been accustomed to privations.”

“ I do not mind them. They are a comfort to me.”

“ Well, you see, dear, if we make a few further savings, and with the consideration that it is impossible there can be as much to do next year as this, I think we may keep our minds easy,” said Frank, relieved and quite cheerful.

“ I trust so,” Mary responded more doubtfully ; but the slight despondence of her tone was lost upon her husband, whose ardent and sanguine temperament was naturally disposed to thrust fear aside, and who seldom counted the cost of any enterprise in which he was eager to engage. Frank Austen had still all the virtues and some of the follies of a young man.



The winter passed, and Frank scarcely thought again of the anxieties of that morning. They often weighed on Mary's mind; but she spoke not of them.

"If," she thought, "I cannot be the help I wish, I will at least be no clog. Perhaps I am wrong not to trust God more for the future."

Poor Mary! whenever it was possible, she thought herself wrong.

To Honor Sky the winter passed cheerfully and busily. Her work prospered but slowly, still it did prosper. Her school was perfectly orderly, a few attended regularly, and a few seemed to be interested and impressed by what they learnt. Honor's success fell far short of her early expectations, still it was success.

It was Saturday afternoon, a half-holiday, and Honor was tying up plants and raking borders in her little garden. A soft wind, like a loving breath, blew from the cloudless

sky, and the bright June sunshine gladdened the new-born blossoms and the fresh green earth. The grasshopper chirped, and the birds sang, and the air was laden with scent, wafted from gardens and bean-fields.

“Good afternoon, Honor,” said a voice at her gate, and turning round she saw James Carver. He was looking uncommonly well. A feeling of more than usual satisfaction had taken from his countenance that look of sharpness and calculation, disagreeable in one so young ; his dark eyes shone with a more genial expression, and his whole mien bespoke unusual complacency and good-humour.

“Good afternoon, James. What a lovely day ! It is such a treat after these withering cold winds.”

“It is very fine. I thought, as it was your half-holiday, and so very pleasant, that you might like a country-walk.”

“So I should, but it is so seldom that I

have a day like this for my garden-work—but I *should* like a walk, too,” she added, thinking of the woods in their early freshness of foliage, of the soft green moss studded with periwinkles, and of the water-lily spreading out its broad leaves and silver cups on the woodland ponds.

“I thought it would be a fine day,” continued James, “for walking to Falconhurst Castle, where you have told me so often you would like to go.”

“Oh, thank you, James. How kind of you to think of it,” she cried, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, for she had indeed for a long time wished to go to Falconhurst Castle, which was situated between four and five miles from Thornbury, at least by the footpath, which led for the greater part of the way through the woods. As Honor spoke, she ran to tell her aunt, and change her gardening dress for one more suitable to the occasion. She returned quickly, in high spirits, only casting as she went out one glance at her flowers, and

saying, "Ah! I fear your foster-mother is neglecting you, pretty ones."

"We can tie some of them up when we come home at night," said James.

They had a charming walk, quite as delightful as Honor expected. She gathered wild-flowers to her heart's content, the moss had never before seemed so soft and green, the woodland waters so clear and calm, the air so sweet, or the birds so musical. Never before, either, she fancied, had James been so kind and agreeable. He even in a measure responded to her ecstasies about the moss and the flowers, and the cuckoo's note, and did not seem to laugh at them as he sometimes used to do. He appeared to be conscious of this himself, for he said:—

"I don't know how it is, Honor, but when I am with you, I seem to take pleasure in things which I do not care for at other times, and which I do not quite understand why I care for. But I suppose I

should like anything to-day, I am in such good spirits."

Honor looked up as if to ask why to-day, but after a second, said:—

"This charming day is enough to put anybody in good spirits."

"But that is not the reason with me. I have a much more substantial one, and that is why I got you to come out, for I want to tell you. You are my friend, you know, Honor, are you not?"

"Of course I am, James, but why do you ask me that so often, as if you doubted it?"

"Because I like to be certain of it, and I like to hear you say it."

Honor looked at him. There seemed to be a singularity in what he said. He continued:—

"This long walk, alone with you, reminds me of the one to the sea-side, when we were children, and that is the reason I asked you to come."

"Ah, you too like to remember that walk."

"I do now. At one time I hated to remember it. But I like to remember it now, and think of the difference. Do you remember my telling you in those old days, Honor, that I hoped the time would come that I might be a rich man and a gentleman."

"No, I am not sure that I do," she answered, for, to tell the truth, the fulfilment of the hope had appeared so impossible to her, nay, the hope itself had at the same time been so incomprehensible, that she had hardly thought of it. She had no guess how, from that day to the present time, it had been ever present to the mind of Jim, his leading motive, his support in poverty and humiliation, and the source of his indomitable energy and perseverance.

Jim had at least one element of a great mind, the faculty of never, in any situation whatever, however doubtful or difficult, losing sight of his object. Had the object itself been as stable as his own mind, he might have

been a really great man. But no one had laboured harder for the meat which perisheth.

“I am surprised you don’t remember, Honor, for I have always been of the same mind. I knew my birth was not worse, and I was sure my brains were much better than Squire Donthorne’s, that the old manor-house belonged to, and who used to come and do the great man at Dredham. And the time has come sooner than I expected. I have been able to render great service to the Great Eastland, and now I have got one of their best and most confidential situations. Besides that, by means of my exertions, the railway is paying so much better, that my own shares in it, which I purchased only last year, have risen immensely. And that is not all, for I have got my name up so in connection with railways, that I am to be had up to parliament about some new lines. I am on the look out at present for a piece of ground near Thornbury, on which to build a house. Perhaps it

may be a little while before I can begin it. I am resolved to have a handsome one,—much handsomer than any in Thornbury.”

Honor listened in amazement. It seemed to her as if Jim must be the possessor of Aladdin’s lamp. For the moment, her imagination was somewhat bewildered. At last she cried :—

“Oh, James! What will you do with so much money? You will help, won’t you, to build churches and schools?”

“Schools, perhaps I may. I shall do what others do. Why should I do more? But I should like to do something for you, Honor.”

“For me! that is very kind, but I do not want anything, thank you, except some books for the school library.”

“What a simpleton you are, Honor!” cried James, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of merriment. Honor laughed too; for James’ mirth did not appear to be of an




ill-natured kind, but to proceed from sheer amusement.

They were now in sight of Falconhurst Castle, and almost close to it. After they had emerged from the woods, their way lay over an open country, with occasional orchards and hop-gardens, but the view generally bounded by woodlands, though here and there the undulating plain appeared to stretch to the blue horizon, against which, now and then, stood out the mighty sails of a windmill almost motionless in the light spring air. My pedestrians had, while they were talking, reached the top of a gentle eminence, and, at a short distance from the foot of the slope on the other side, lay Falconhurst Castle. The building and the situation were equally romantic.

Falconhurst Castle was a square edifice, quite in ruins, which were still tolerably extensive. Very picturesque it looked, with ivied tower and moss-grown battlement,

standing out so clear and dark in the light of the declining sun, while the still waters of the ancient moat, on which the water-lilies slumbered peacefully, yet girdled, as of yore, the hoary time-worn walls. Perhaps there is nothing more suggestive of repose to the mind than the sight of a ruined castle in a secluded situation. The very contrast it presents in its present aspect with the warlike scenes it has witnessed, its associations with the past and the distant, and the pensive melancholy those naturally produce, all contribute to the same feeling—a feeling which is greatly heightened when seen at that quiet hour when the toil and the fever of the day are over, and nature as well as man appears to rest from her labours. The influence of the scene, as she suddenly halted on the top of the acclivity, was instantly felt by Honor Sky, and the more so, that she had never before seen anything similar to it. Her laughter was instantly hushed. She stood still, fasci-



nated and subdued, and when she spoke next, it was almost in a whisper, as if she felt herself in a Superior Presence. As for her companion, he said, in his natural tone and somewhat carelessly :—

“ It is certainly a pretty place. It would be a nice situation for a new house, and if the moat were filled up, it would not be unhealthy.”

Honor felt something for the minute jar upon her feelings, but it quickly passed off. They ran down the slope together, and crossing a little wooden foot-bridge over the moat, began to explore the ruins. This occupied some time. James’ chief amusement in it was afforded by watching the lively interest displayed by Honor. It was quite an unaccustomed phase of human nature to him, who, though he had studied it carefully, had studied it chiefly in connection with pounds, shillings, and pence, and the result of his present cogitations was that Honor


Sky was unlike other people—the exception which proved the rule, and that the world could never go on if there were many in it like her, but that she, being but one, was very piquant.

At last Honor had exhausted her explorations, and they sat down together on a terrace at the further side of the building, to watch the sun set behind the woodlands which belted the horizon. Her thoughts, or rather her feelings, for in such moments thoughts become feelings, were engrossed by the serene beauty of the scene and its powerful suggestions. She started with the incongruity of the idea as James suddenly asked her :—

“Honor, should you like to have a silk dress?”

“I! Oh, no; I think not. Of what use would a silk dress be to me?”

“The same use as to anybody else—to wear, of course. I should like to see you in a silk dress, Honor.”



“ Should you ? Why ? ”

“ I should like to see you look like a lady.”

“ But wearing a silk dress would not make me look like a lady.”

“ I think it would, Honor. I don’t see that you don’t look as well as any lady.”

“ It is very kind of you to say so, James,” said Honor, colouring ; “ but would the silk dress make me more so ? ”

“ Of course it would. Ladies wear silk dresses.”

“ All ladies don’t wear silk dresses. Mrs. Austen hardly ever does, and she told me she should never buy another, and I am sure nobody could look more like a lady than she does in her grey merino, or the lilac muslin she had on yesterday.”

Even James could not gainsay this. He hesitated, cleared his throat, and then asked :—

“ If I were to give you a silk dress, would you wear it, Honor ? ”

"Oh, James, you are very kind," she said, hesitating between the fear of seeming ungrateful and the earnest desire that he would rather give her something else—something she should like better, and which would not cost nearly so much, and Honor fancied that James' first wish, in making her a present, must, of course, be to please her. "But a silk dress would cost so much—more than a sovereign, a great deal—would it not?"

"It would cost four or five, I should think."

"Four or five pounds! oh, that is far too much to spend upon me. A sketch-book and a set of pencils would not cost nearly so much, would they? and I should like so much to teach myself to draw."

"You shall have the sketch-book and pencils, too, if you will wear the silk dress. Will you, Honor?"

Honor hesitated. She fancied herself flaunting to church in a handsome silk dress, beside

Mrs. Austen, in her plain lilac muslin, and she coloured with shame at the bare idea. Hardly knowing what to say, she rose from the sloping bank of turf on which they had been sitting. James rose, too, and came close beside her, so close that he almost touched her dress.

“Honor?” he said, “Honor?” Then, as she still did not answer, he added, in a low tone, and with somewhat quickened breath. “Honor, will you not wear it for my sake?”

Involuntarily she had looked up. Her companion's dark, piercing eyes were fixed meaningly on her countenance. As the reflection of the setting sun shone on his face, they glittered with a strange eagerness. A tremor ran through Honor's frame. She felt frightened, yet fascinated, as if by some spell. A new sensation seemed to steal over her existence. Yet she did not answer. James turned away, partly in anger, partly in disappointment.

"Let us go home," he said, in a cold, business-like tone.

The spell was broken. The critical moment had passed.

"We had best, I think," said Honor, rousing herself as from a dream. "It grows late, and Aunt Keziah will wonder what has become of us."

And, without another look at the ruin or the surrounding scenery, they both turned their steps homewards.

After a silence of some duration, Honor endeavoured to begin a conversation on common subjects, and in her usual friendly tone, but James answered shortly and moodily. He was evidently hurt, if not offended. Honor was vexed—vexed even to a degree which surprised herself. She did not, however, attempt to speak again, and they walked all the way home in silence.

In vain, for Honor, the sun sank in golden radiance, in vain the stars came out like silver



points in a field of blue, in vain the aspen whispered lightly in the evening breeze, in vain the nightingale poured forth her notes of liquid melody, in vain sweet scents filled the air, in vain—for, almost for the first time in her life, she had neither thought nor feeling to bestow on the world around her. An agitating world within claimed for the moment all her soul—the great was effaced by the little.

James did not even walk with Honor to her own gate, but bade her “Good night” at the point lying nearest to his own lodging. She invited him, but rather awkwardly, to return with her and take tea.

“No, I thank you,” he said coldly; “I have idled away enough time this afternoon.”

Honor felt the tears ready to rush to her eyes, and dared not trust herself to speak again. She was very sorry she had vexed James so much, and she thought mournfully over it all the way home. Her aunt ex-

pressed great surprise at not seeing her companion return with her, and much concern at Honor's want of appetite for tea, after her long country walk. She satisfied herself, however, with the conclusion that she had over-walked herself, and never seemed to dream of any other cause. Nor was she surprised when, after tea, Honor, instead of taking her work as usual, stole out into the starlight. Mrs. Keziah was a person to whom the pleasure conferred by a communion with nature was by no means incomprehensible. But it was not to commune with nature, so much as with her own heart, that Honor had come out. Yet Nature, now that the first surprise and agitation had passed, was not without her influence, and as the clear, soft light of the stars fell upon the quiet old church, and on the pale, slender lilies in Honor's garden, her heart seemed to swell and melt.

Again she saw James' face as she had beheld it at Falconhurst, pale and agitated,

with the bright light shining on it; again she seemed to feel his piercing eyes fixed on her face, again to witness his discomfiture, as she had appeared to decline to wear the dress even for his sake. And then, as all their early and intimate association, all his late companionship and kindness, all his often-repeated expressions of regard—of exclusive regard—rushed upon her memory, her heart was pierced that she had wounded him.


On the threshold of the thoughts awakened by these reflections, Honor paused nervously. The future to which they pointed seemed strange and hazy. Then turning her inward eye from it, she began to paint her own future, not exactly as she had painted it on a former occasion, all *couleur de rose*, at Dredham, with Frank for rector and herself for school-mistress. Now as she beheld her life stretching out into the distance, her aunt gone—age, and perhaps infirmity, stealing on herself, and loneliness bearing them company, a

cold wintry hue appeared to enfold what had seemed so roseate. Then over the misty threshold, where her imagination had paused in maiden alarm, she seemed to see faintly a shadowy vision ; and a pleasant sense of protection, of possessing some one, and being possessed by some one, stole over her.

James, in the meantime, had gone home in an excessively bad humour. In the very hour of his success he had met with a rebuff where he had least expected it. He was excessively angry with Honor, and resolved to punish her by not going near her again. But then came the disagreeable reflection that the punishment would probably be much greater to himself than to her. He felt disposed to accuse her of affectation in her unwillingness to wear a fine dress. She must have known, too, what he meant by offering it to her. She was an arrant little coquette, and it would serve her right to give her nothing at all. Then again came the doubt whether this would

really vex her—the tormenting doubt whether she would care what he did. But James Carver had a pretty good opinion of himself. “I am handsome and rich, and would give her anything she liked, as she knows, and when will Honor Sky ever meet with such a chance again? To fancy her so blind to her own advantage is absurd. It would be unnatural, it would not be like other girls.” But then came the reflection that she was not like other girls—as unlike them and everybody else in her motives, as she was superior to them in attractions. It was even no consolation to think he could easily get some one else, for the very uncertainty into which she had thrown him only made him feel all the more how there was, for him, no one else but Honor Sky.

It was the first—the only sentiment of affection he had ever entertained, and it was also the first check of any consequence he had received in his career of success. His pride, as well as his passions, was enlisted in this new pursuit.



Had Honor really been a coquette, had she really wished to rivet the bonds she had so unconsciously fixed, she could not have adopted a more cunning plan.

## CHAPTER X.

WHEN one evening, about a fortnight after the expedition to Falconhurst Castle, James Carver made his appearance at Honor Sky's cottage, she could not avoid a little exclamation of pleasure at seeing him, nor yet a slight—a very slight confusion of manner, when she recalled the circumstances of that memorable evening. Her confusion, however, was surpassed by that of her guest, who betrayed an unusual degree of awkwardness.

“I am glad to see you again, James,” said Honor; “we thought you had given us up.”

“And perhaps you would have been glad if I had.”

"Nay, James—you are unkind to say so ; I never gave you any cause to make such a speech."

"Yet you would not take a present from me."

"No, James, I never refused a present from you. I only declined to wear a silk dress, because I thought it would be ridiculous for me."

James frowned disapprobation, but let the reason pass without comment. Then drawing a small but elegant drawing-book from his pocket, and a handsome case of pencils, he said pointedly, and fixing his eye calmly, but with meaning, on her face :—

"You said you wished for these ; will you accept them as a present from me ?"

Honor coloured violently, and her hand trembled, but she answered, with tolerable firmness :—

"Thank you, they are very acceptable."

James had been standing. He sat down



with a satisfied air, but said nothing. Honor busied herself in getting the tea. Mrs. Keziah hobbled in from the other room, where she had been since the arrival of their guest.

James spoke but little during tea-time, but seemed to have resumed his old friendly footing. After tea he entered with Honor into their old style of conversation. She felt relieved and grateful. It was exactly like one of their old evenings, except that James was perhaps a shade more deferential towards Honor, and seemed to try more than usual to take an interest in all that interested her.

As this evening had passed, so passed many more; the two young persons, however, gliding more and more into confidence and tenderness, which, though never expressed in words, betrayed itself in innumerable acts, and in the whole tone of their intercourse.


In all this Honor was the ruling spirit. When near her, James seemed subdued by

some magic spell, which he could not resist or explain. He appeared to see things with other eyes than his own, to have perceptions and feelings which at other times had no existence for him at all. Thus perhaps it was that Honor Sky fancied they had many feelings in common, that she remained in ignorance of how utterly dissimilar their natures really were. Early association, too, supplied in a measure the place of natural sympathy of character.

James never himself spoke on the subject of religion, but when she did, he listened to her with the pleasure with which he always listened when she spoke on any subject, and she fancied that he agreed with her, because he did not dissent. Honor, in common with most persons of strong affections united with considerable imaginative powers, was prone to invest those whom she loved with the attributes of her own mind, and experience had not yet taught her to rectify this tendency. More-

over, it must be confessed, she was anxious to think the best, and was probably not entirely free from some self-deception. The picture which had first dimly suggested itself to her imagination on the night after her walk to Falconhurst, had, day by day, assumed outlines more distinct, and hues brighter and more decided, till at last it appeared to occupy the whole sphere of her mental vision. It was the first time Honor Sky had been loved, and to an unoccupied heart there is generally an irresistible spell in that one circumstance alone; and if she ever had a misgiving, she thrust it aside.

Many weeks had now passed since the evening of the expedition to Falconhurst. It was again a Saturday night, at that beautiful season when summer begins to melt into autumn. The twilight was now shorter, and night once more began to resume her right over part of the waking hours of mortals, while the full moon rose, with all the softness of summer



and all the brightness of winter, over the corn-fields whitening to harvest.

The roses and the lilies were gone in Honor's little garden, but the apples began to redden on her tree, and clusters of fruit hung upon the vine on her cottage wall. Fair and white rose the old church on the knoll above the town, and silent as the sleepers beneath fell the moonbeams on the graves. No breeze disturbed the perfect repose of the scene, and the air was cool and balmy.

"Honor," said James, and his voice was agitated, "the foundation-stone of my new house is to be laid to-morrow. Will you think of me then?"

"Yes," said Honor, but hardly with her usual frankness.

"It will be ready in a year, and then—"

He stopped. You might have heard Honor's heart beat in the silence. James, too, gasped a little as he spoke.

"Honor, if I were to give you a silk dress,

would you wear it—not now, but *then*, for my sake? ”

Honor’s face burnt like a volcano ready to burst, and she trembled from head to foot.

“Has not fate united us from our childhood?” said James, drawing closer. And Honor said not nay. It seemed to her that God’s Providence had, and she did not notice the word her companion had employed.

That night Honor could not sleep. She sat at her window and looked out on the moonlight—her mind far too agitated for thought. She could only breathe a wordless prayer, that the same Heavenly Father, who had led her through all the trials and adversities of her childhood, would now, if wealth and prosperity were to be her lot, guide and teach her still, amid what she had often heard possessed still greater temptations. Nor did she pray for herself alone; her heart sent forth fervent aspirations for another likewise. Then she wondered what Mr. and Mrs. Austen would think,

and if they would be pleased. But what would they do for a school-mistress?"

"At any rate," thought Honor, "I shall not leave them for a year, and there will be plenty time to look out." And then she thought of her pupils, and even amidst all the present tumult of her feelings, she could not help a heavy sigh as she contemplated leaving them. Nay, she had even a feeling of having done wrong in having thus turned her back upon her work, the work she had always fancied God had especially given her to do. Was she right? Was she certain she was entering on a better path? Many things, many little circumstances, now rushed upon her memory. She wished she had thought of them before. Strange misgivings with regard to James, strange doubts of her own motives, would intrude. She blamed herself for precipitation. And yet, it could not be wrong to marry. Not if she married wisely, in singleness of heart and purity of motive. Then

she knelt down and prayed fervently that God would order all things as He saw fittest and best, and that she might be enabled entirely to commit herself to His keeping. She arose, much composed, and again going to her window, looked out on the moonlit church and graves. The tumult and fever of her feelings were allayed; but still she was not perfectly happy.

She did not see James the following day. He knew that she was always closely engaged on Sunday till late in the evening, and Sunday, moreover, was a day on which he had an instinctive notion he should find Honor less agreeable than on any other day. But on Monday evening he made his appearance. Honor, whose misgivings had been put to flight for the time, welcomed him with a face of blushing pleasure; James, looking upon her as his own, thought her beautiful, and felt sure he had done wisely.

"Nobody could tell her from a lady, I am sure, and if I had married a lady, she would

never have been half so clever or good-tempered as Honor."

He invited Honor, as soon as tea was over, to take a walk. It was far too late for Falconhurst Castle, otherwise Honor would have liked to go back there. As for James, he did not care as long as they were together. He had not that keen association of feelings with places which was so marked a feature in Honor's mind. They agreed to take an ordinary ramble in the woods, and on a mossy bank, shaded by trees, they seated themselves by a lilled pond, to enjoy the stillness and seclusion. Honor looked down into the dark, clear depths of water, then up to the blue sky overhead.

"That pond," she said, "looks like the eye of the wood, looking up to God in gratitude for the peace and beauty he has bestowed upon it."

"Dearest Honor, what a funny fancy! You are so full of these pretty notions. I have



sometimes thought you should write a poem. I cannot say I care much about poems, but people who write them sometimes get a great deal noticed and taken out. But I want to talk to you now about some things of consequence. I don't at all like your continuing the mistress of a national school. Could not you give it up at once?"

Honor looked up in dismay.

"Give it up, James? Of course I must give it up when—when the house is ready; but, in the meantime, why should I? What should I have to do without it? What would Mr. and Mrs. Austen say? I was just thinking, the other night, how glad I was to be able to go on for a year. Why should I give it up?"

James smiled with superior wisdom.

"Consider what the world would say, Honor, and the position I hope you may occupy."

"What could it say, James, except that I

had adhered to the duties of my situation till called upon to exchange them for other and superior duties? I should think persons would rather respect me for doing so, than for giving them up at the first instant they were no longer necessary to provide for my daily bread. It would be so mercenary; and I have always hoped that teaching was with me a labour of love as well as of necessity."

"Honor, dearest, you know nothing of the world, or you would not think so. I know much more of it than you do, and you can trust to me."

"Trust to you, dearest James!—most fully, in one sense; but I am quite sure, in the present case, that everybody, at least, would not agree with you. Mr. and Mrs. Austen, I am quite sure—"

"For Heaven's sake, Honor dear, do not always be cramming Mr. and Mrs. Austen down my throat, or you will make me hate them. Few people think as they do. It is

all very well for clergymen to have such notions and act upon them ; but it would not do for other people."

"But what is it you wish me then to do, James?"

"I had not quite thought of any plan, but I thought we might consult together. If the Austens' little girl had only been two or three years older, you might have gone to be her governess."

"But perhaps they might not have wished a governess."

"Oh, yes, they would have liked you, if they could have had you without a salary ; and you could have been so useful to them in many ways."

"But I feel certain they would much rather have me continue in the school. And I cannot see the advantage of making the change you mention, even were it practicable."

"Great advantage, I assure you. Many gentlemen have married governesses—in fact,

it is quite a common thing, and thought nothing of. Governesses are often—indeed, generally—ladies in reduced circumstances; and people hearing I had married the governess at the Vicarage, would be quite satisfied.”

“But the people in Thornbury would know all about it.”

“It would have an influence even on them. But though I am building a house here, and intend to live here, I hope a time may come when I may be connected with other people and other places. And besides, Honor, I thought if you were to live for a time with people, who, like Mr. and Mrs. Austen, have always lived in good society, you might pick up a few things which, perhaps, you don’t know—in the way of manners I mean. When you are handsomely dressed, I am sure nobody will ever be able to tell from your appearance, or from your general manner, that you were not born a lady; but there are a few little

ways that only habit, or the great attention I have paid to them, can teach ; and you cannot tell the value society has for such trifles. It has a far higher value for such things than for those of real importance. You might be the most amusing woman in the world, and sing sweeter than an angel, yet, if you were to hold your knife in the wrong way, or to bite your bread at dinner, or do a thousand other little things which are really nothing in themselves, the stupidest woman in the world, who understood such matters, would be a more welcome guest than you."

Honor looked affrighted, and exclaimed :—

"Oh, James! Don't take me away from the life I am accustomed to, and where I can do good, and am so happy, to place me in the midst of a world so cold, and formal, and foolish! Surely, dearest James, we are far happier as we are."

"Nonsense, Honor. You put me quite out of patience by such nonsense. I suppose you

would like if we could be the two ragged little children we were the first night we set foot in Thornbury."

"No, indeed, James, I should not. I am not so silly. I only meant, let us not think of these fine folks, nor try to ape their manners, or force ourselves into their society. Let us be happy and natural. If God gives us riches, let us do good with them, and have all the pleasant things they can give us too. If persons of higher birth and position than ourselves pay us attention, let us receive it kindly, but do not let us stoop to court it, or make ourselves miserable about it. Dearest James! let us go on naturally and cheerfully, and take things as God sends them. What society will ever be so pleasant to us as that of our own fireside, or what will ever make us so respectable as to do what is right?"

Honor spoke eloquently, with the eloquence of truth and feeling, and her countenance was

yet more eloquent than her words. James gazed fondly on her fair face, till he almost forgot the subject they had been discussing, and for one of these brief moments which sometimes occurred in Honor's presence, and never on any other occasion, the world, its pomp and circumstance, seemed to grow pale, and a momentary glimpse of better things broke upon his mind. It was, however, but a glimpse, and evanescent as a lightning-flash.

James turned his eyes from Honor's face, drew a long breath, and it was gone. Not so, however, the feeling of added admiration which had produced it. He assumed his most winning manner, and asked his companion with fond reproach :—

“If she should wish to injure him or his prospects? *I* would do anything for *you*, Honor, however much against my own judgment.”

“And would not *I*, too, do anything for *you*?” she said, half crying.

"I know," he said, "if you persist in continuing in the school, it will injure me in many ways; but still, if you have set your heart on it, I shall say no more."

A more cunning speech, to obtain his end, James Carver could not have made. It awakened at once the impulses of gratitude and of self-sacrifice, so strong in Honor Sky, and on these she answered:—

"Oh, James! I have not set my heart on doing anything that would injure you. I would rather do anything than that. I will give it up at once—I will, indeed."

James started up in gratitude, and overwhelmed her with thanks and caresses, and then, with an almost instantaneous misgiving, but feeling she could not draw back from her word, she asked —

"If she was to give Mr. Austen notice to-morrow?"

"No, no. Not quite so fast as that. I should not mind your remaining a quarter or



so longer. I would not, on any account, that you affronted the Austens."

"Oh, thank you, James. I was quite sure you would not. They have been so kind to me—how could I think for a moment you could wish me to do anything ungrateful."

"Certainly not; and the Austens may be of great use to us."

"Oh, there is nobody in the world to whom they might not be of use, they are so good and kind."

For an instant James looked disconcerted. Then he said:—

"Let us go home."

Honor consented willingly. They both walked home, musing and thoughtful. The sun had set, and the moon was not yet risen. The night began to feel chillier, and somewhat autumnal. A thin, grey mist overspread the sky. A breeze arose, disturbing the glassy surface of the water, and waving like funereal plumes the tops of the trees. A flight of

rooks hastening homewards passed over the open glade in which they were walking, and the rush of wings came solemnly on the ear. Honor felt sad; she hardly knew why. Poetic and sensitive as her temperament was, her mind and her time were generally too fully occupied about practical matters to be prone to musing, or melancholy fancies; but to-night, whether it was that her spirits had been exhausted by the argument she had been engaged in, or depressed by doubts as to the course into which she had been persuaded, or that the excitement of the last few days had produced a reaction, she felt, as she looked round on the grey twilight scene, a profound sense of the mournfulness and emptiness of life steal over her. An unaccountable sense of dissatisfaction took possession of her feelings, and a foreboding of evil, like a cold rain-cloud, overshadowed her soul.

She had, however, too strong a mind to

yield to or court such emotions, and making an effort to shake them off, she tried to engage her companion in conversation. But he, too, seemed silent and thoughtful. As they parted for the night, he said :—

“Will you let me break the matter to the Austens ?”

At the moment, Honor gladly consented ; but when she was alone and had time for reflection, she regretted she had done so. In the quiet of her own little chamber, and in the silence of the night-watches, when she had time to think, the regret she had felt at the moment at having promised to give up the school increased and strengthened. She felt like a soldier deserting his post, and she almost wondered how James could have asked her, and the same haunting feeling of dissatisfaction which had filled her mind during her homeward walk, took possession of it again. And then she eagerly blamed herself. James did not, could not be expected to understand

the importance of her continuing in the school. It was all her fault, and she resolved to tell him so to-morrow, and gain his consent to retract her promise before he should tell the Austens, for what would they think of her, after all her professions, when they found she had so easily yielded? And yet, though somewhat comforted by the resolution she had come to, she was not quite re-assured. That she and James should think and feel so differently on some subjects was not pleasant. Poor Honor! After all, her mind was not so easy, nor her heart so light, as before her worldly prospects became so brilliant.

James, half fearful, from her reluctant consent, of the repentance which had actually taken place, resolved not to give her time for a change of mind, and accordingly, early in the morning, he called at the Vicarage to communicate his engagement, and to make some arrangement for Honor to leave the school.

He found Mary with her husband, and lost no time in telling the news he had come to communicate. Both Mr. and Mrs. Austen were, for the minute, much surprised. Although they knew of Honor's intimacy with James Carver, they had never thought of it in that point of view. Honor's heart had always appeared so much in her work that they had never calculated on her bestowing it elsewhere. Still more, however, were they surprised when James informed them that it was Honor's wish to give up her situation as soon as a successor could be found.

"Not till then, however," he said, pointedly; "for Honor, feeling how kind you have been to her, and how much you have done for her, would not, on any consideration, put you to inconvenience. She begged me to say she was quite willing to continue another quarter, or even a little longer, as we shall not be married for at least a year."

"Then why will not Honor remain to the end of the year?"

"Because she naturally feels that her change of position will require some little preparation." And then, without giving Mrs. Austen time for any rejoinder, James turned to her husband, and giving him, in general terms, a statement of his circumstances, made him also understand the position he wished to occupy.

"Honor and I," he said, boldly, "being of what ladies and gentlemen call low origin, find it the more necessary to guard against anything which may degrade us in the eyes of the world."

"But surely," cried Mary, "Honor cannot think it degrading to her to teach, or she has very much changed. I teach, and have done so for a long time."

"Oh, but that is quite different. As I said before, however, Honor is particularly anxious not to put you to inconvenience in any way.

She feels you have always been her best friend, and hopes she may always reckon on you as such."

"Surely she cannot doubt it," cried Mary, tears starting to her eyes. James did not see the tears, nor, if he had, could he have guessed their source. Content and pleased by the warmth of Mary's assurance, he now took leave, glad that he had accomplished the matter so adroitly, and pleased with the notion that the Austens, at least, would visit himself and his wife. After he had left the room, Frank and Mary looked at each other for a minute, then Mary cried :—

"What can it mean? I should never have thought Honor Sky could have behaved so. This is a strange world. Who is there in it one can really depend upon? It is very bitter to me, Frank, for we have been such friends. What can have changed her so?"

"The prospect of wealth and of worldly prosperity, if she is changed ; but do not be so

down-hearted, dearest, for I, for one, do not believe it. I have the highest opinion of Honor Sky. She will clear it all up when we see her. The thing that I least understand is that she should have engaged herself to that hard, calculating, worldly infidel. But women's fancies are incomprehensible."

"You do women injustice," said Mary, a little warmly, "but with you Honor Sky is always right," and she stifled a sigh.

"Indeed, dearest, I have never known her wrong till now, and when I excused her at the expense of her sex, I ought to have made an exception. There is one woman whose fancies are not incomprehensible, unless it be that fancy which made her the husband of so odd an animal as myself."

Mary smiled and was pleased, yet there still lurked in her mind a feeling that Honor was much more clever and useful than herself, and that her husband must know it and feel it. Poor Mary felt it very deeply, and she



reproached herself bitterly for the shade of jealousy she felt. As soon as she was alone, she prayed fervently that God would forgive her and make her glad of Honor's superiority; yet, somehow, Mary could not be glad that Frank was conscious of it. Again and again she was wounded by his praise of Honor, which was very open and frequent. Poor Frank! he fancied that, in praising her *protégée*, he was pleasing his wife.

James, on leaving the Vicarage, had gone round by the school, where Honor was in the midst of her daily labours. In spite of her somewhat sleepless night, her reflections had led her to commence her work to-day with renewed energy. She was resolved to show to herself that her heart was still in it. She answered James Carver's tap at the door herself, and was surprised to see him, as he had never come before during school hours.

"I have not come to interrupt you," he said, "nor have I time to stay an instant, but

I thought you would like to hear it is all settled with the Austens, and they are quite satisfied, and Mrs. Austen is as fond of you as ever, she says; so good bye, my beauty, till the evening."

And without waiting for an answer, he hastened away. Honor returned to her work, but not with the same spirit she had left it. It required all her self-command to be able to attend at all, so anxiously did her mind run on what she had just heard, and no sooner were the morning lessons over than, unmindful of her dinner, she hastened to the Vicarage to hear from the lips of her friends themselves what they really thought. Mr. Austen had gone out, but Mary was at home, and thankful to see Honor. She advanced to meet her as the latter entered the room, at first a little doubtfully, but no sooner did she catch a glimpse of Honor's honest, though somewhat perturbed, countenance, than all her fears seemed to vanish, and her jealousy too.

“So you are going to leave us, Honor, I hear,” she said, in a tone as if she were ready to cry, but with all her usual sweetness of manner.

Honor coloured, and her eyes fell, and then she burst into tears, and the two friends wept together, holding each other’s hands.

“Well, dear girl,” said Mary, “I hope you may be happy. You have my best wishes and prayers.”

“I trust I shall—I think I shall. He is so fond of me. We have known one another all our lives, and we both think we seem set apart by Providence for one another.”

“Does Mr. Carver think so?” said Mary.

“Indeed he does.”

That he should have expressed such a sentiment was a relief to Mary. She was eager to think the best, for Honor’s sake.

“I am so sorry, dearest Honor, that we are to lose you. I trust it is not selfish in me, for I cannot help it, but when you are

gone, I know not what I shall do. You are my right hand—far more than my right hand—for you think as well as act for me. You supply my deficiencies, which are so manifold. Oh, how shall I ever get on without you?” and she could not restrain her tears, which came thick and fast.

Honor was pierced to the heart by them. At that instant she appeared in her own eyes a monster of ingratitude. She threw herself on her knees beside her early patroness, and kissed her hands passionately. Mary continued :—

“Since I married, Honor, I have so often felt that my dearest husband might have had a wife far better fitted to aid him in his duties, and it has always been a consolation to me to think that, however I had failed myself, I had, at least, been the means of providing him with one who could, not only in her own department, fully carry out his views, but who, in many respects, was an efficient substitute for

me. And I am sure he thinks so too," continued poor Mary, "though he is too good to say it. Oh, forgive me, Honor, I am such a selfish creature, so selfish in every way. I am so mortified at my own short comings, and yet I seem to have no power to cure them. Your leaving us seems like a judgment on me," she added, remembering her jealous thoughts, "and now it seems to me that it is only when you are going, I know all the comfort you have been."

"But I will not leave you," cried Honor, eagerly, "till you find another as well suited to you." Mary shook her head, as if that were impossible, and Honor continued, "I will not leave you, at any rate, till I am married. I am sure James cannot object to my remaining, when I explain all to him; indeed, he must not object," she added, with spirit, "and even after I am married, I shall still be in Thornbury, and be able to do all I have done, except be mistress of the school."

Mary brightened a little. This was great comfort, and, somehow, she had not thought of it before."

"I thought," she said, "it was impossible *you* could think teaching a degradation."

"No," cried Honor, eagerly, "I—" and then she suddenly stopped, colouring violently. She remembered part of what had passed between James and herself the previous evening, and, guessing what he might have said, she was suddenly silent. Again, as on the previous night, a sudden chilly sensation smote upon her feelings. She longed to see James, to tell him at once that she must continue as long as she could in the school, and to re-assure herself, by another interview with him, that there was no cause for an unacknowledged misgiving, which, nevertheless, continued to increase in an alarming manner.

## CHAPTER XI.

IF Honor Sky had sensitive feelings and quick impulses, she had also a clear judgment and a strong mind, which usually righted the balance, that might have been disarranged by the more ardent part of her nature. Her interview with Mary had confirmed the result of her reflections overnight. She felt certain it would be wrong to give up the school, until actually called on by new and incompatible duties to do so. She felt convinced that it could not injure either James or herself to continue. Everything now seemed quite clear to her, her duty more especially, and she

trusted easily to be able to bring him over to her opinion. She waited eagerly for the evening, which would give her the opportunity she so much desired.

The evening did not prove so fine as the previous one. Although the corn was not in, or the hops picked, or a yellow leaf in the woods, it was decidedly autumnal in character. It was one of those evenings which come while summer is yet with us,—the foretaste of a graver season—just as, ere the prime and the glory of manhood have begun to decline, come seasons of sadness, perhaps, or of sickness, which seem the harbingers of the time, when we, too, shall fall into the sere and yellow leaf.

A grey vapour curtained the sky, and beneath it even the leafy woods looked dark and hueless as on a winter's day. A chill wind blew with an autumnal moan, and from time to time large cold drops fell from the clouds. James, however, arrived in excellent



spirits. All had gone well with him to-day, his letters had been satisfactory, and all, he imagined, had been arranged about Honor and the school according to his wishes.

“This is too disagreeable an evening for you to walk, Honor, I suppose?” he said.

“Oh, no; I do not mind it at all,” answered Honor, who was anxious to be alone with her lover, and did not even wish her Aunt Keziah, blind and deaf though she had become, to be a witness to their discussion. “I shall be ready as soon as we have had tea.”

Accordingly, whenever that meal was concluded, they sallied forth together, not taking the woods to-night, but the open country. Honor’s mind was full of her resolution, and she was on the point of commencing on the subject nearest to her heart, when James himself touched upon another, also deeply interesting to her feelings.

“I have been thinking about your Aunt Keziah. Should you like her to live with

us, or shall she have a cottage of her own?"

"How kind of you, dearest James!" cried Honor, gratefully, and gratified beyond measure, the feeling of dissatisfaction which had haunted her disappearing at once like a morning cloud, and being succeeded by something like self-reproach. "We had better ask herself. I am afraid she would hardly feel at home in a large house, with servants; and she is not like myself, young enough to learn."

"You, Honor! But you will be quite at home, won't you?"

"I shall try to learn to be so as fast as possible."

"As soon as you can possibly get rid of the school, we must manage for you to go at once to live in some genteel family."

Honor did not lose the opportunity. At once she stated firmly and affectionately the result of last night's meditation and this day's interview with Mrs. Austen. James was much

chagrined, and lost his temper. Still very grateful for his kindness about her aunt, Honor kept hers, and would not be moved either from her resolution or her gentleness of manner. He grew absolutely pettish, and, at last, he said :—

“I would do anything—I have done everything for you, Honor, and you will not do even this little thing for me.”

“It is not a little thing, and you are indeed mistaken, if you think I have any other reason in refusing it, except that I feel it would be absolutely wrong to grant it. Oh, James! you do not know what I suffer in refusing you, nor how I wish you could see it as I see it.”

What a coquette she is! thought James; and, like all women, determined to carry her point! It is provoking she should have taken this whim, and it must be out of perversity. Then, speaking aloud, he inquired, in a more moderate tone :—

"How is it possible, Honor, you can like slaving and teaching as you do, day after day, the same tiresome round, like grinding at a mill?"

"Indeed, I do not find it so. To be sure, each day's and each year's routine are pretty much as you describe, but I associate the lessons with the children to whom I teach them, and then the monotony is lost. In the peculiar development of each mind, and formation of each character, I find an abundant diversity, and, as I see them grow under my hand, an intense interest. I can hardly describe the happiness I feel when I seem to have succeeded in inspiring a right feeling, or forming some useful habit. Then, indeed, it seems as if God had put on me an honour far beyond what I deserve, and I feel so happy—so very happy—in being permitted to contribute to man's great work on earth."

"And what is that, Honor?"

"To make mankind better, and wiser, and

happier, so that God may be more magnified in his creatures."

Honor spoke in a low tone, and with awe, as if in the presence of some superior Being.

Even James was a little impressed, and felt forced, at least for the minute, to believe that Honor's resolution was no mere feminine trial of her own power, but proceeded from some strong principle or predilection, however incomprehensible it might be to him. Her usual softness of manner, and the way in which she had hitherto yielded to all his proposals, had not prepared him for so much firmness. Mentally resolving that, when they were married, he would not yield to such fits of obstinacy, he said :—

"Well, Honor, as you will not yield to me, I suppose I must yield to you; and you may take it as the greater compliment, that I never in my life before gave up anything I had determined on. To this I attribute all my success, and I do not break through my rule

without some dread that there may be bad luck in it."

"Luck, dear James!—surely you don't believe in luck?"

"No, no," he said; "I am not superstitious. I only spoke for fun!" but, as he spoke, he coloured.

The truth was, like many an infidel, James Carver was superstitious, and had an instinctive faith in omens more especially, though the faith was, after all, a faith rather of the feelings than of the reason. He hurried away from the subject:—

"I give up to please you, Honor; and because I love you, I do for you what I would do for no other human being."

"Oh! but are you not convinced I am right? Don't you see—"

"I see nothing," he said, interrupting her, "but you, and that there is nobody like you."

Honor was only half satisfied. She was,

however, so glad that the matter had been arranged as she wished, that, for the time, she persuaded herself everything else was right.

They had now walked a considerable distance. The evening grew more and more gloomy. The clouds gathered more dark and heavy, and the wind blew with a more sobbing sound. The large cold drops began to fall more frequently, and everything seemed to announce an immediate change of weather.

"It looks terribly sour and cold," said James, "and the instant the wind falls, the rain will come down in torrents, and that, I expect, will happen as soon as the sun sets."

"And it is setting now," said Honor; "look at that dull, coppery glow on the horizon—perhaps we had best hasten back."

James fully agreed with this proposal, and, turning instantly, they began to retrace their steps with much greater rapidity than they had come. But it was in vain they attempted to outstrip the rain. They had made but a

very small part of their way home when it began to come down with violence. They were, as I have said, in the open country, and there was no way of returning by the woods. At some little distance, however, and only a few yards out of their direct path, was a large spreading oak. James proposed they should take shelter under it for a few minutes, till the violence of the shower should have abated. They found, however, when they reached it, that they were not alone in taking advantage of the protection afforded by its huge spreading branches—another person already occupied a place beneath them.

At first, Honor was hardly even able to discern that he was of the opposite sex, for the thickness of the foliage so entirely obscured the gloomy twilight as to have deepened it almost into darkness. Gradually, however, as her eyes became accustomed to the imperfect light, she saw with more distinctness that he was a young man about the middle height, and probably a gentleman. He was standing



a little apart from where she and James had taken their places. The latter was standing with his face to her and his back to the stranger, who was looking towards them, Honor thought, as if he recognised, or thought he recognised them. At last he said :—

“Mr. Carver, is it not?”

His voice was good and well modulated, and the tone had all the ease and self-possession of good-breeding. James turned sharply round :

“Ha, Wood, I did not recognise you. How do you do?” James’ tone was familiar and patronising in a way which rather shocked Honor’s ear. She fancied, too, even in the dusk, that it did not please the stranger, but as soon as he spoke again, she decided it must have been merely fancy, for his manner to James was cordial, and seemed even marked by an anxiety to conciliate.

“I have just been at your lodgings, on business.”

“Well, come back again, then, will you, in about half an hour, and take a Welsh rabbit

with me. I will meet you there as soon as I have seen this lady home."

Honor felt herself colour all over at being called a lady, and again she fancied, as the stranger glanced at her for a second, that there was something slightly contemptuous in the scarce perceptible movement of his lip and nostrils. She could now see him much better. He had approached rather nearer to them, where the foliage was not quite so thick, and the sky had for the minute become a little lighter. He was a man still young, though considerably past the prime of youth, and probably, from the sallowness of his complexion and the sunken, anxious expression of his eye, looking much older than he really was. Still he was an eminently handsome man, with something refined and what we term aristocratic in his bearing, even in spite of the worn and shabby aspect of his garments and his reckless, *roué* air. Honor did not like his appearance, yet it strangely interested her. It seemed to remind her of some one.

or something, and she tried to recollect if she had ever seen him before. But in vain; her memory was completely at fault.

The rain had now in some degree abated, and James expressing his opinion that it would not be finer that night than it was then, they took their way homewards.

“Who is that person—that gentleman, James?”

“He is a gentleman, at least, so I believe, who has been unfortunate, or imprudent, and has now to live as best he can. He is clever and useful, and I have got him some employment.”

“Does he belong to Thornbury? for I fancy I have seen him before, or he is like somebody I have seen before.”

“No, he is not a Thornbury man at all. Indeed, I believe he is a person originally quite superior in birth and fortune to anybody in Thornbury, but, as I said before, he has been foolish and extravagant. I fancy, however, he has sown his wild oats, and wants to

patch his broken fortunes again, for he is a very proud man."

"And what is his name?"

"His name is William Wood—at least that is the name he goes by."

"Is he a nice person to have for an acquaintance?" asked Honor, doubtfully.

"Oh yes—a capital person—the very best person—a man who, if I serve him a little now, may be of incalculable benefit to me by-and-by. If he should retrieve his fortunes and resume his proper position, he might do me a world of good, and it is my belief he will, one day."

"But I do not like people with feigned names. It looks very much like as if they had done something they were ashamed of."

"And I dare say Mr. Wood has done something he is ashamed of, though nothing, I believe, in the sense you mean. His father was a man of large landed property and old family, and he was the eldest son. The estates were entailed on him, but he was the last heir of entail. At college he was exces-

sively extravagant, and afterwards in London. Before his father's death he had given post-obit bonds for the greater part of his property, besides having had his bills paid over and over again; and I believe his mother and sisters were left very badly provided for in consequence."

"Oh, James! he must be a very wicked, selfish man."

"It is the way of the world, Honor. One must not be too squeamish, or too hard on a poor wretch who has got into difficulties, and I have never heard that he has done anything dishonourable, except what anybody would do under the circumstances. Thousands, every day, do the same thing out of thoughtlessness, and I believe he is heartily sorry for it now."

"Oh, if he is sorry, that alters the case," said Honor, compassionately.

"You see, Honor, you should not be so hard on him. As I told you, he has a very proud and high spirit, and he got very bitter when he found the world, which he knew to be as bad as himself, looked down on him.

He resolved to turn over a new leaf, and get rich again. And I think he will succeed, for he is a man of very strong determination, and he has been stung to the soul. And depend upon it, nothing makes a man so ambitious as to feel he is trampled on." James spoke the last words with vehemence, then added more calmly, "Self-love is a man's strongest feeling."

"Oh, do not say that, James. I know our hearts are naturally very selfish, but I am sure there are many who, for Christ's sake, and with God's help, live only to sacrifice themselves."

James suppressed the laugh and the sneer, for when Honor spoke of religion, he always began to fear he was on dangerous ground. He had no idea that religion was with Honor a part of everything,—that there was no act in human life which was not, in her mind, connected with its motives,—no opinion which its teachings did not influence. He had always viewed religion as something altogether extraneous to man's ordinary life, while, in Honor's eyes, it was as the atmosphere in

which all things lived and moved, the spirit from which every act proceeded, and the aim to which all tended.

James' opinion is, I fear, the commoner one, even among those who profess that they are not of this world. He now answered :—

“You have been lucky to meet with such persons, for I have never met with any, except yourself,” he added, continuing in a half jesting tone :—“The fact is, we all act for our own happiness, which, call it what you like, is selfishness. The only difference is, that people place their happiness in different things. Some people have sense, and some have none. After all, that is the grand difference.”

James spoke in a tone that might be taken either for jest or earnest. Honor fancied it was the former, but wished he would not jest on such subjects.

They were now at the door of her cottage, and, wishing her good night, he hurried to his lodgings to keep his appointment with Mr. Wood.

## CHAPTER XII.

JAMES CARVER had time, ere the arrival of Mr. Wood, to change his damp coat and muddy shoes for dressing-gown and slippers, also to stir the fire, to have the table laid for supper, and to give everything that appearance of comfort and cheerfulness which he peculiarly appreciated. Then seating himself in his easy-chair at the fire, having beside him a small table, covered with pamphlets and papers, he awaited the arrival of his guest.

Mr. Wood was not long in making his appearance. Seen by the light of the candle and the blazing fire, he looked an even handsomer man than he had done under



the tree, though his face was not a pleasant one, but had about it something peculiarly restless, anxious, and unhappy. He was, as I have said, about the middle height, formed with much elegance, and in his movements strikingly graceful. He had a profusion of dark hair, which had, however, begun to get thin on the temples. His features were small and finely moulded, his complexion pale even to sickliness, his eyes large and dark, and full of a languid lustre, very unlike the piercing orbs of his present companion. And yet they had a look as if they might light up into fierceness. Altogether, though now in repose, his countenance bespoke the existence of strong passions and ill-regulated feelings, with a deep-settled unhappiness. Full of restlessness and even recklessness though it was, there was yet something in the firm lines of the small mouth, which spoke of determination as well as passion, and though the face wanted altogether that astute practical character, which was so conspicuous in James

Carver's, it was neither weak nor imbecile in its traits, but inclining to that class which we call intellectual, and which generally bespeaks the presence of some imagination and literary taste.

"Good evening, Wood," said James, familiarly, but without rising; "you will find that seat opposite tolerably comfortable."

The stranger's face grew paler yet, and an angry spark shot from his eye. "Insolent boor!" he said to himself, but he durst give no outward utterance to the pride—morbidity in its excess—which James Carver was constantly wounding.

"I have got all the papers ready for you," continued the former; "and I'll tell you what is to be done. You must give in all the necessary data for the line by Dredham and Derringham at once, as I go to London about it in a fortnight, and it must be begun forthwith."

"It would not be half so good a line as the other by Sudwich."

"I don't see that. At any rate, it is your own interest, as well as mine, to make it out better, and you know the country. I tell you there must be a line there, and if we don't look sharp, we may whistle for the Act."

"But I can hardly reconcile it to my conscience—"

"Well, then, don't reconcile it to your conscience, and leave it alone. If we don't do it, somebody else will, and we must live as well as other people. In the world it is diamond cut diamond. Wait till we are at the top of the tree, and then let us be as nice as we like."

Mr. Wood made a face of disgust.

"It would have been easier to me if I had not been born a gentleman, I suppose. And so there is no other way now-a-days to make a fortune. I wish I had lived in the times when Fortune was wooed by the strong arm rather than by the cunning brain."

"You agree, then? "

"I suppose I must, as there is no other way."

James smiled his sneering smile.

“Every man has his price—gentlemen as well as plebeian folks. The only difference is, that, generally speaking, gentlemen having nearly all the world can give already, one can hardly find anything to buy them with. You fancy, perhaps, Wood, that all this dirty work comes easier to me than to you, but cottage-born though I am, I would rather rise without it if I could, but it is impossible otherwise, and rise I must and will.”

“And so must I,” Wood repeated, emphatically. “I must repair my cursed folly, redeem my mortgaged acres, and restore myself to my own place in society.”

“And what will you do for those who help you to ascend?” said James.

“I will further your ambition as best I can—help you in your speculations, or take any other way that may present itself.”

“Will you invite me and my wife to visit your wife and yourself?”

Mr. Wood hesitated and winced, and then said :—

"Yes, if the ladies get on—but we are not married yet."

"No; but I shall be very soon; and when you have regained the family honours, I suppose you will not wish to transmit them!"

"You are going to marry soon! Of course you are going to marry to further your ambition. I should hardly have fancied the time had come yet that you would have got a lady to accept you."

James answered, gravely:—

"I am going to marry for love."

"Love!" cried Wood; and he laughed. "Well, miracles will never cease. You are about the last person I should have suspected of being romantic."

"And I am not romantic!" he answered, testily. "I have known and loved Honor Sky all my life. Few ladies are better educated, or so well informed. Boast about blood as you like, there is no lady in the land like her!"

Still Mr. Wood continued to smile, as if

much amused. He said—but it was always difficult to tell, from his scoffing manner, whether he was in jest or earnest :—

“I do not doubt Miss Sky—is that her name?—is quite equal to any lady; but I have not a particularly high opinion of the sex. Weak as water, unjust and selfish, without forgiveness for the very faults their own folly has created. Yes, Carver, when I look back on the past, and think how, from my infancy, my mother flattered, pampered, and indulged me—how she hid my faults and saved me from punishment—how, in after days, she would have moved heaven and earth rather than I should have wanted anything—and how the rest were made to give way to me; and then how, when misfortunes overtook me—misfortunes of her own causing—she turned her back on me, and refused to see me. Yes—my mother though she is—I hate that woman, for she has been my worst enemy. I never loved her much—for one does not love one’s slave—but now I detest her.”

His eyes flashed as he spoke.

"Well," said James, "mine was a mother of a different kind, and she has made my fortune, if yours has marred yours. She was the cruellest old thing that ever lived, and did nothing but scold and beat me from morning till night. I hated her, and resolved to run away and make my fortune, to spite her. And I have done it!" he said, stamping his foot and setting his teeth; "but no thanks to her!"

The languid eyes of the visitor lighted up with a transient fire. He looked for a minute fixedly at James, and without the ill-veiled contempt with which he had hitherto regarded him. In this outburst of passionate feeling—the first he had seen him display—the haughty patrician appeared to feel a bond of brotherhood between himself and his low-born associate.

"It is not then," he said to himself, "altogether the sordid love of lucre and creature comforts that made this peasant ambitious—

and he is in love, too! Faugh! how can the passions of such low people interest me? And yet he would have been a safer man to trust to without them. Love and hate alike mar our success. Pure, persevering selfishness is the surest road to fortune."

"You were speaking, the last time I saw you," he said, aloud, "of some new bank which was likely to prove a very thriving concern for the shareholders. If I earn that sum in the way you speak of, I think I shall best invest it there."

"You will do quite right. Every farthing I have is there. It is a most prosperous affair. As soon as I acquire a little more outward importance, I shall be one of the directors myself—in fact, I am virtually one already. The bank was originally an idea of my own; but, at that time, my funds were not sufficient to be the principal originator. But I mentioned it to Mr. Raymond, one of our directors, and my chief patron. He was charmed with it, and, in fact, it was soon set



a-going. Ere long, as soon as my house is built, when I have been up in London again once or twice, and have fairly come before the public, so as to have a name, I shall be made one of the board. You could not make a better beginning ; and I will do all I can, as I said before, to help you, on condition that, when you have regained your original position in society, you will introduce my wife and myself into your set ; and, in the meantime, we will qualify ourselves so as not to disgrace it. Now you know the terms on which I will help you, and they are very easy ones. Do you accede ?”

“ Will you trust me if I say I do ? ” answered Wood, sarcastically.

James looked at him suddenly and sharply.

“ Yes,” he said, “ I will, if you promise.”

“ I thought you trusted nobody ? ”

“ Neither do I, when I can help it. But one cannot always—and, moreover, it would not be pleasant for you that I should proclaim either your obligation or your ingratitude.”

Again Wood's face expressed disgust, but he answered :—

“ Well, I will not deceive you. Honour among thieves ! ”

“ Thieves ! ” cried James, reddening angrily.

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ No affront. I only used a common proverb.”


He now took leave, and we shall follow him for a second or two to his lodging, which was very different in aspect from that he had just quitted.

Everything in the dingy little room which he entered and called for the present his own, looked smeared and dingy. The walls were begrimed with smoke, and the paint worn and dirty. Though the evening was so damp and chilly, there was no spark of fire in the grate, which was full of a mixture of soot and shavings, while one tallow candle emitted a faint gleam of light, just sufficient to display the uninviting features of the scene. Wood looked round with a shudder.

“Would to heaven,” he said to himself, “he had promised his aid on any other condition, for if ever restored to my own rank, I should have wished to sweep away from my existence every association with this hateful time—to blot out all connected with it from my memory, were it possible.”

And then William Wood, seating himself in an old-fashioned, hard arm-chair, covered with haircloth, threadbare, and full of holes, fell into a reverie.

Before him passed a vision of former days, his childhood, caressed and fondled, but not very happy, his boyhood not very happy either, but still indulged and flattered; his college career of wildest licence, and the years, which had succeeded it, of fiery passion, and of bitterest anguish and mortification. Nor was the voice of remorse altogether unheard. His father's grey hairs bowed down with sorrow to the grave, his mother and sisters deprived by him of the luxuries and comforts to which they had been accustomed.



True, he tried to stifle this voice, by saying fiercely to himself, as he had said to James, that it was all his mother's fault, that she reaped as she had sown, and that *he* was the victim; still the thought would intrude, that he was a reasonable and accountable being, and that, however others might have been to blame, he himself was not less so. Yet he was not so utterly miserable as he had been. For a time, like a caged lion, his soul had restlessly and hopelessly beat against the bars which custom and opinion had interposed between him and a restoration to his former place in the world; but lately, this restoration had not seemed so impossible. Hope, faint though it was, had dawned upon his despair—a worldly hope only upon his worldly sorrow—and not hope only did he feel, but as the “chances” of life lay before him, there was anew kindled in his heart that fierce excitement which the charms of the gaming-table had been wont to create.

He had indeed abjured the gaming-table for

ever, for, as I have said before, he was a man of determination, and he was now convinced that, in the long run, there he must be ruined. But a new game, on a wider field, appeared now to offer itself, and it seemed only to require perseverance and patience, with a little unscrupulousness, to ensure success. Mr. Wood had talked of his conscience, and after such a career as his had been, it may seem strange that he should have possessed any. Yet he did, in a certain sense, though it was rather the effect of early habit and feeling—the pride of the man of the world and the patrician—than the result of any fixed principle of right and wrong, or any sense of duty. Now, as his thoughts took the turn of anticipating the future, instead of preying on the past, his spirits rose. He would return to the home of his ancestors, he would marry into some family of station, he would cultivate the talents he knew he possessed, and the world which had looked down on him should court and respect him.

He would withdraw himself then for ever from that mire of petty contrivances, semi-falsehoods, exaggerations, misrepresentations, briberies, at which his gentlemanly taste revolted. He would withdraw himself, too, from the associates of the present, all at least but James Carver. Him he had promised to countenance, and he felt the promise binding on him, without the aid of what seemed to him the low threat with which its requirement had been accompanied. And his low-born, low-bred wife too ! *Parvenu* women were always so dreadfully vulgar, and the mind of William Wood shrunk horrified from the idea of a forward, overdressed woman dropping her H's and eating with her knife.

“How am I to endure it ?” he said aloud, when the sound of his own voice recalled him from Dreamland to a sense of the actual, and the many other difficulties and disagreeables which must be overcome, ere it would be necessary to think of the solution of this.

Again the dirty room, the guttering candle, the stained walls, became visible to him, and in an agony of impatience for the time when the dream should become reality, he strode up and down the narrow limits of the apartment.

## CHAPTER XIII.

JAMES CARVER's house was nearly finished. It stood a little way out of the town, and the situation was pretty, backed by the woods and overlooking the open country. It was a large square brick building, very substantial, and thoroughly well built, having every convenience imaginable for a house of its size, with stables, coach-house, and offices, quite important. A large walled garden lay behind it, and a lawn stretched out in front. A carriage-drive led from the garden to the house, and at the gate there was a lodge. Everything about it was good; but Honor felt confusedly that it was not the kind of house she should have



chosen. She would have liked a much smaller one, with roses trained over the wall, and flower-beds and beehives in front. There was something cold, and ugly, and formal about the great house and the grand furniture James talked of putting in it. Honor always thought the Vicarage the prettiest furnished house in the world, and if it had not been presumption, she should have liked to have had hers furnished in the same style. But James spoke quite contemptuously of the Vicarage and its furniture, and Honor felt inclined to be miserable when she found how much finer her house was to be than that of her former patroness. Much as she was attached to James, and accustomed as she now was to her future prospects, and pleased by them, it was almost a relief to find that it would be necessary to defer her marriage a little longer than had been at first intended. The house could not possibly be dry enough to be inhabited during the winter months, and there yet remained to choose the furniture,

besides a great deal to do to the garden and grounds.

James also intended to purchase a carriage before he was married. He had grown rich faster even than he had anticipated, and, as he said, he resolved "to begin in good style from the first."

Honor, in the meantime, continued to go on with her school as if no such magnificence awaited her. It continued to prosper under her management even faster than at first. It was now much better attended, the children in general came more regularly and more punctually, behaved better when they were there, and a few even, and this was Honor's crown of rejoicing, seemed to engage in their duties, not merely from the fear of blame or the hope of praise, but because they loved their work, and did it "as unto the Lord, heartily."

Much ignorance, much stupidity, much deceit, and many vexations there were still, but the advance was very visible. Frank Austen said his school was the most hopeful

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thing in his parish, and Honor herself the greatest comfort he had in it.

"It seems quite like an interposition of Providence, does it not, Mary?" he said one afternoon to his wife, as they were walking together in the garden, "that Honor's marriage is again delayed. I sometimes fancy it will never take place at all."

"I think that is very unlikely," said Mary, "and I cannot bring myself to wish it. Poor Honor! It would cause her much suffering."

"And yet," said Frank, "I doubt if ever she will be happy as the wife of James Carver, essentially opposite as they are in character. I know Honor Sky, and sure I am, wealth and luxury will not make her happy, and I know of no advantage but these she will find in this marriage. I have often asked myself if she can be more worldly than she appears, and if, after all, these have been her attractions. But even if they have, they will never satisfy her—she has in her too much of a nobler nature."

"I am sure," Mary rejoined, "she reckons

on doing a great deal of good with her money, and after all, you know, Frank," she added, with a sigh, "money can do a good deal, and the want of it is a sore evil."

"Come, Mary, dearest, don't be so down about things. All will go well."

"Ah, no," she cried, "all is not well. I have been so miserable—so anxious for some time past. I have so longed to speak to you about all these," and she produced a handful of papers.

Frank had been wearied and harassed all the morning by the froward wills, unreasonable expectations, and intractable tempers among which his work lay. His elastic spirits had just thrown off the worry of the day and begun to rejoice in the beauty and tenderness of his home, when this new blow came.

"Let us go in, Mary, and I will look at them at once," he said, dejectedly.

At the end of half an hour the disagreeable occupation was completed, and Frank remained confounded and distressed.

“What shall we do?” he cried, looking anxiously in Mary’s melancholy dark eyes, but meeting with no answer there but doubt. And yet I should not say no answer, for their never-failing affection and calmness, even amid their doubt, were very different from the anxiety of her husband’s gaze. Mary, so timid to dare, was strong to endure. Persons terrified her, but mere circumstances she rose superior to. For a long time she had dreaded this day, and worn herself away in miserable anticipation of it, and what she had dreaded most, was telling it to her husband. Yet now that it had come, it seemed almost a relief to know the worst. She threw her arms round him and said :—

“Let us consider the matter calmly. It need not overwhelm us.”

Frank looked at her in surprise. Love and sympathy he had expected from her, but neither help nor aid. Her unexpected fortitude restored him in a measure to himself. He returned her embrace with all the fervour of his nature.

"God bless you, Mary, for being such a comfort to me!"

And now Mary burst into tears, but they were tears of joy.

"Am I a comfort to you?—a *comfort*? oh, Frank, I thought I could never be anything but a burden."

And all the unhappiness, which had so long oppressed her in silence, was declared at last. Long as he had loved her, Frank now, for the first time in their mutual lives, thoroughly understood his wife. He saw now the source of the melancholy which had so long preyed upon her, and distressed and puzzled him, and the discovery was attended with some sense of self-reproach.

"Mary, Mary, dearest on earth," he said, "I could scold you for having thought such a thing, did I not see how you have suffered. How could you think that you, whom I have loved for the best part of my life, could be a burden to me? I confess I was not prepared for the strength of mind you have just shown, but

your love, your goodness, since ever I could call them my own, have been the chief joy of my life."

"And this," said Mary "is the happiest moment of mine. Oh, Frank! I have seemed so useless. Honor Sky appeared to do everything so much better than I did, to be so useful, so necessary to you. It seemed to me you could do so much better without me than without her, and when you spoke of her in the terms you did a few minutes ago, it seemed a confirmation of my fears."

Frank looked narrowly at Mary, and as he did so, he coloured deeply.

"Surely—" he began, then stopped, for the responsive colour on Mary's cheek showed that his question had been understood ere it was asked.

"No, no," said Mary, "I knew you were far too good, and so is she, but I was mortified I was not more like her."

"I wish you to be like no one but yourself, my own Mary." And Frank's heart re-

proached him that he had ever, even for an instant, imagined in Mary the slightest imperfection. It seemed to him that he would not change her gentle sweetness for the more bustling virtues of any other human being.

And now, strengthened and supported by their mutual love, they sat down to consider together their mutual difficulties. Their situation was a harassing one. Most of the debts which they had incurred were not on their own account, but on account of things for the church and parish—the school in particular. In spite of its more thriving condition, there had been this year a considerable falling off in the subscriptions—from Mr. Grimsby and Mrs. Winthrop among the rest, because they did not approve of the manner in which the school was conducted; a few among the tradesmen had withdrawn their support because the school was so good, and the children of the poor were getting as good an education as their own children, while another class had ceased to lend their aid because the vicar did not deal



with them. They chose to consider the school as a matter personal altogether to the vicar, and that they were doing him a great kindness in helping to maintain it.

"I am afraid," said Mary, at last, "we must give up the school—at least, give up contributing more than a reasonable subscription, like anybody else."

"Give up the school!" echoed her husband. "My dearest Mary, that is, indeed, not to be thought of. Give up the only thing I really feel I am doing good by."

"I only meant, dear, to give up giving so much."

"But that would be equivalent to giving it up altogether. Mary, dearest, do you remember our bond long ago on that beautiful summer evening?"

Mary hid her face on his shoulder. A thousand tender recollections crowded on her mind—thoughts of her first and only love—of her dead brother—of all the happiness and all the poetry of these golden days. And for

the moment she felt like a renegade. Yet, again, all the difficulties, the otherwise insurmountable difficulties of the present came rushing upon her mind. Her duties to her husband, to her child, the sin and danger of debt, all occurred to her, and without the slightest glimpse of a way to reconcile their contending claims.

"We have put our hands to the plough, Mary," said Frank, "and must not turn back."

"What, then, are we to do?" she asked.

"Trust in God always."


"But we must not trust that He will help us when we are rushing with our eyes open into danger and temptation," said Mary, who, though in speculative matters too timid to come to a conclusion, and who, in such, always adopted the views of her husband, had, in plain matters of fact, an opinion of her own.

Frank got up, and walked up and down the room. Mary's words were not without their effect. He felt himself in a dilemma; on the

one side, his paramount duty, as the minister of a parish, to do all he could for the souls committed to his charge ; on the other hand, the plain duty of every man to pay his debts and maintain his family. He hardly knew which to choose, and he could not see that they were reconcileable. At last he stopped.

“ I will go,” he said, “ to Honor Sky.” As the name escaped his lips, he looked frankly in Mary’s face. She met his glance with another as open as his own, though she coloured violently.

“ You will go with me, won’t you, dearest ? ” he said, as he passed his arm round her and strained her to his bosom. From that moment, her affection for Honor Sky, which had never faltered, was unmingled with any of the mortification which had lately accompanied it. She did not think any more highly of herself than before ; but her husband had told her that he thought there was none in the world to compare with her, and he was truth itself. Though she had no confidence in her own



powers, she had implicit trust in him. In spite of all their misfortunes, she tripped up-stairs almost in gay spirits. It seemed as if she could bear anything. Her little girl came trotting out of her nursery to meet her. She kissed her innocent face, and said in her heart :—

“ All will yet be well.”

Frank, in the meantime, as he continued to pace up and down the room, was not so sanguine. Never had he loved Mary more fondly than he did then, but his very love for her, at the moment, increased his anxiety and distress. He and his wife appeared for the time to have changed natures, and now that his sanguine mind had at last embraced all his difficulties, he felt a prostration of spirits such as he had never experienced before. And not only did this attach itself to the original cause, but it seemed to extend to every department of life, embracing all as it were in a dismal cloud. In that moment of depression it appeared to him that his ministry had done nothing—that

nobody had been the better for him—that he was a mere cumberer of the ground, and when he compared the effect he had produced with the hopes and aspirations of his youth, a feeling came over his soul of the bitterest disappointment. He was surprised to see Mary enter the room with so happy a face. Striving for her sake to subdue, as well as he could, all outward expression of his feelings, they set out together for the cottage of Honor Sky.

It was a sweet evening. The sun had now disappeared, and the dark dahlias and verbenas in the garden were growing invisible in the dusk, which only served still better to display the clustering stars of the white phloxes. The leaves still trembled in the breeze, but with a more shivering sound, and the pale blue sky became darker and darker. It seemed all lovely to Mary, but she did not speak, for she fancied her husband wished to be silent.

They found Honor at home. Her lover had gone out for some days on business. Mrs. Keziah, who was now getting very old

and feeble, had gone to bed, and Honor was sitting at the door of her little porch, trying to read. She put down her book with joy as soon as she saw who was coming.

Mary greeted her with a warmth and cordiality which convinced Honor that it must have been a fancy of her own that the former was displeased with her, and she felt very thankful she had never spoken to her on the subject, as she had sometimes thought of doing. Frank hardly stopped to offer any greeting at all, but began with all his characteristic impetuosity :—

“Miss Sky, we have always looked upon you as one of our sincerest friends, and we have come to confide in you our difficulties, and to consult you about them.”

Honor's heart bounded with joy. The approbation and confidence of Frank and Mary Austen gave her far more real pleasure than the prospect of all the magnificence which awaited her. She seized Mary's hand and kissed it.

“Oh,” she said, “and you really love and trust me so much, and I fancied you did not like me so well as you used to do, and I wondered if you were displeased with my marriage—but it shows one how one can be mistaken, and how wrong and foolish to judge on trifling grounds.”

Mary’s heart smote her. “Very wrong and foolish,” she said severely, thinking of herself.

“But I promise you never to do so again, dearest Mrs. Austen,” Honor said, penitently.

“You, dearest Honor, you are always wise and good.”

Honor was a little puzzled, but quite satisfied, and Frank, eager to terminate all mere preliminary conversation, at once opened the whole affair which had brought him to the little school-mistress, and then, too, Mary, as well as she, learned the real bitterness of his soul. In that moment of confidence he could not conceal it.

“Frank, Frank,” cried Mary, “and can you feel so—you who have done so much?

What must I feel, do you think, when I am so useless? Oh, Frank, think how you have laboured—”

“The most diligent labourers,” said Honor, gently, and fearing, for the instant, that she might be thought presuming, “must, I fear, all feel at last they are but unprofitable servants, but it is not, after all, what effect our work has had, but the spirit in which we have done it, that is of consequence to ourselves. Perhaps if we saw too much what it had done, it might not be good for us. I am sure I have heard you say so, Mr. Austen.”

Frank had often said and preached so, but we do not always remember our own teachings. She had stopped, but Frank said:—

“Go on.”

“I was going to say,” she continued, “that it may even have had effects which you cannot see. You may have spoken words which may have influenced lives without you knowing it.”

“Alas! I fear I never spoke such words,



nor are there many, I fear, on whom such words make much impression."

"I am sure, however, there are some, for I myself can trace the whole happiness of my life to some such mere words, spoken by one who, I daresay, forgot both me and them as soon as they were said. I was but a child at the time, yet, all through my life, it has been my cherished and most earnest hope that I may yet live to see and thank one whom I shall ever regard as my greatest benefactor."

Frank was now much interested.

"I should like," he said, "to hear the circumstance—it may help to cheer me and strengthen my faith, but I fear there are not many Honor Skys in the world."

Then Honor told of her childish days, and the longings she often had, thoughtless and mirthful as she described herself by temperament, and of how, one day, as she sat in the churchyard, in her native village, learning a hymn, a stranger gentleman came by and asked her to show him the way, how pleasantly

and kindly he had talked, and what advice he had given her at parting. "Ever since then," continued Honor, "these words have been my strength, and the idea has even crossed my mind that the gentleman who spoke them must have been a messenger from heaven. And a heavenly messenger in one sense, at least, he was to a helpless, ignorant child."

As Honor spoke, a feeling of bewilderment stole over her auditor. He seemed as one who heard in a dream. The misty veil of time appeared gradually to lighten and float away, till down the vista of years he, too, beheld a scene of his youth—a scene which deeper interests and more stirring events had, for a time, swept from his memory, but which came back now, fresh and vivid, as with the tints of early morning. His eye lighted up, his cheek flushed, and he asked quickly :—

"Did you go to a dame-school, where the children sat on the stumps of trees and learned from horn-books ? "

"Yes, but why do you ask ? or is it possible

that—" Honor stopped, the flush of conviction overspread her face, and she trembled with joy as she seemed to stand on the verge of the accomplishment of a life-long wish.

Mary did not understand, for though Frank had mentioned the circumstance during his first visit to Derringham, it had long escaped her memory, and she stood now, looking from one to the other in some curiosity as to the cause of their mutual emotion. At last Frank spoke.

"God," he said, with much feeling, "has rebuked me for my want of faith, while, at the same time, He has sent me comfort and joy, which humbles me. He has indeed done me a great honour in making me instrumental in establishing and supporting you."

"And I have seen you at last!" cried Honor; "I know you at last!"

As she spoke, she trembled violently; and, for some time, her agitation was so great she could say nothing else. At last, after some minutes, she said, more calmly:—

“Ever since you came to Thornbury, the idea has haunted me that I had seen you before, but I could not remember.”

“I have no doubt I am much changed since then,” said he ; “and yet, now that I look at your face, I recognise you. How well I remember it all now, though I had not thought of it for so long a time—the bright summer day, the corn-fields, the church among the trees, and the blue-eyed child. There was another child, too—a handsome boy, with dark eyes. But—”

“That was James Carver,” said Honor, interrupting him.

Again Frank seemed struck, and said :—

“How strange !”

Honor, in the meantime, had recovered, in a great measure, her composure. They were still all at the entrance of the porch, where the Austens had found her on their arrival. She leant against the clematis, which covered it. Her eyes were fixed on the stars, which began to brighten in lustre as the blue of the sky

deepened in hue. There was something in her upraised countenance so pure and noble, and, at the same time, so simple and child-like, that it struck both Frank and Mary. They looked at each other, and the same idea was expressed in the eyes of both.

“Surely she was not made to belong to James Carver !”

But Honor’s little moment of reverie quickly passed, and she invited her visitors into her parlour. Here the object of their visit was again resumed. Honor heard, with the deepest concern, all they had to tell, and more especially what related to the school. An ardent longing—an earnest wish filled her heart, but she could give it no expression till she had seen James Carver. Yet surely he would not refuse. No ; as she remembered the fine house he had taken her to see, and the fine furniture he had spoken of, with the sums of money he had told her both would cost, she could not doubt what he would do, particularly if she wished it. She looked up

brightly at the anxious faces of her two friends, and asked :—

“ If the school were entirely provided for, could you manage with the rest ? ”

Frank looked at Mary to answer the question.

“ Yes,” she said, “ I think so—easily.”

“ Because I think I know of a way— Oh ! I should be so happy if I could only do something to please you two ; but I must first ask James.”

Frank, whose hopes had risen with her cheerfulness, felt them sink again as he fancied he caught a glimpse of her meaning. He had not the faith in James Carver which she had. He did not, however, of course, express that sentiment, yet he was in much better spirits than when he left home. The tale of Honor's childhood had done him much good.

“ Yes,” he said, as they walked home by the light of the stars, “ ‘ cast your bread upon the waters, and it shall return to you again after *many* days.’ ”

Honor Sky had not the opportunity she wished for, of a long conversation with James Carver, so soon as she expected. She saw him, indeed, frequently, but only for a few minutes at a time. Never had she known him so much engaged as at present. He seemed in unusually good spirits, and told her that all his affairs were prospering—that he hoped, in a very few years, to be a very rich man. She wished to take the opportunity of speaking to him on the subject which lay so near her heart, but he told her he was busy, and that he would talk to her some day when he had more time. She asked him to make it some day as soon as possible, as what she wished to say was of importance. He smiled.

“Of importance to you—that is, in your imagination, dearest. But I know well now the kind of things you think important. I dare say you want a set of new slates or school-books. You have such a habit—but I do not like you the worse for it, it amuses me so much—of thinking little things of import-

ance and great things of none. I would lay any wager it is about the school."

"I wish, James, you would not think the school of no importance."

"Nor do I think it of *no* importance; yet of what importance is it to us, compared with my prospects and successes?"

Honor had a feeling as if this speech grated on her ear, but she had a way of putting aside and fancying she had misunderstood any speech of James's which did not quite please her.

"Well," she said, "it is of the school; but rather in connexion with the Austens than about itself alone."

"About the Austens! I am very busy; but still, if you would come out in the garden, as I like to take advantage of every moment I have to spare for exercise, I will hear what you have to say."

Honor eagerly agreed; and, though it was cold and almost dark, they went out together. She did not think it right to tell him the ex-



tent of Mr. Austen's difficulties, but she told him that his circumstances were such that he was no longer justifiable in spending so much on the school.

"Certainly," said James; "I quite agree with him. But what is that to me, or to you either, now you are so soon going to cut the whole concern?"

Again his words grated on Honor's ear. She answered, quickly:—

"Yes, of course, I must give up being mistress, but I must always take a deep—the deepest interest in the school; and I hoped, James—I hoped, considering what we both owe to education, and what we both were once in this very school, you, too, would have done the same."

"Really," he began, rather testily, "I don't see—I give five pounds annually—more than anybody in Thornbury. What is it you want, Honor?"

"You have been always telling me of late how very rich you are, and you told me, the

last time I saw you—and it was so kind of you—that you would give me a large allowance every year for myself. Now I thought, if you would allow me, I should like so much to give it to Mr. Austen for the school. He could, I dare say, contrive to scramble on for another year ; and if I could only set his mind at rest, by promising him this at once for next year, I should be so happy.”

“ Really, Honor,” James repeated, “ you are quite absurd ! If you make over your allowance to Mr. Austen, how are you to purchase your dress ? ”

“ Oh ! anything will—”

“ Don’t say anything will do, for anything will not do. I must have you handsomely dressed, as becomes your station, and as will do credit to me. I seem nobody in your opinion, in comparison with Mr. Austen.”

Honor felt much hurt at the injustice of the reproach, and so much displeased, that, for a minute, she forebore to speak.

“ You do not know,” she said, at last,

“what I owe to Mr. Austen? Do you remember the young gentleman who came to Dredham dame-school one day when we were children, before our expedition to the sea?”

“No,” he answered, somewhat surlily.

Honor had now recovered her temper, and began to describe the occasion, so as to endeavour to recall it to his memory. She also related what had passed between Frank and herself, and the strength, the consolation she had derived from his words in many an after-hour of temptation and distress. James listened as one who heard not. He neither comprehended the gratitude itself, nor the cause for which it was felt. Sanscrit or Hebrew would not have been more incomprehensible than the language which Honor used then was. But while she had been speaking, his ever ingenious brain had struck out a new notion. His whole faculties were absorbed in the contemplation of how best he might promote his own interest, and considering the concentration of his mind on

this subject, perhaps it was not wonderful how quickly it grasped all that bore upon it. Taking no notice whatever of Honor's narrative, he said :—

“ I do not know that I would undertake to do it always ; but still, Honor, as your heart is so much set on it, and it might be advantageous—yes, I see how I could turn it, so as to sound well and make 'an impression ; I would not mind your promising for a year or two, as an experiment, and if we found it answer, we could go on. I am glad now you did not give up the school. I think I shall be able to make something of it.”

Part of this speech was as unintelligible to Honor as hers had been to James, but all she did understand filled her with joy and gratitude, which she expressed in the liveliest terms.

“ I have already,” he said, “ set on foot a scheme for re-establishing the paper-mill, which will employ a great many of the poor, as well as their children, and will gain me

great credit among them, nor do I think it can be a losing concern."

"Oh, dear James; how kind and good of you! This was always the way I hoped you would spend your money, and it makes me so happy. Does Mr. Austen know?"

"Mr. Austen! No; he is the last person in the world I should mention it to, for he has such eccentric notions, there is no saying what he would think of it."

"Oh, he would only think it good and full of philanthropy, I would answer for him, and be so pleased at your not trumpeting your good deeds. But I may tell him, may I not, about the school?"

"Oh, yes;" he answered, and fell into a reverie. He congratulated himself that he had not let slip the real object of his paper-mill, since the fancied one had done him so much credit with Honor. While Honor was thinking with delight of his goodness, he was mentally on the hustings at the borough election, making a speech to the "Independent

Electors of Thornbury," in which he spoke of himself as a "man of the People," who had "chosen his wife from the people," and who, feeling himself "identified with the People," was resolved to devote his life "to the service of the People. Had he not already given pledges of his sincerity? Had he not devoted the very first-fruits of his success in life to the service of the People of Thornbury? Had he not been the means of re-establishing the paper-manufactory, which had so long been stopped, to give them work and bread? Had he not been the main support of the school, in the hope that the children of the Thornbury People might learn there to rise, as he had done, and was it not his fondest hope that one of the ragged boys he saw now shouting before him, might yet stand where he now stood, and attain the distinction so anxiously coveted by him—the proud distinction of representing in Parliament the ancient Borough of Thornbury."

Little, indeed, did Honor guess the ambi-



tious thoughts which filled the mind of her lover, as they walked side-by-side in the little garden. She fancied that he felt as herself, and that at last their sympathy was complete. She did not ask for words, for in this faith she was satisfied. Were not deeds more than words? It was but a cold, bleak evening, but to Honor, in her present mood, there was beauty in the shapeless forms of the trees, in the soft and thickening gloom, and in the dim lights of the town in the distance. At last James, remembering he had business, and must not dream away the time which ought to be spent in realising his visions of ambition, took leave.

Honor remained behind. She was very happy. Never had she loved James so much as to-night, never had she felt so entirely satisfied with her own lot in life. Brightly her future stretched out before her, without a cloud in the sky, or a blot to mar the fairness of the prospect. She was so happy at having discovered in Frank Austen the husband of

her beloved friend and patroness, Mary—the unknown hero whom she had so long venerated—so long hoped to see, that the very hope itself appeared to have become a part of her mind. This recognition appeared to complete the only link wanting in her life to connect the past with the present. It seemed to her as if the parts of her destiny were now united into one whole. She saw the Finger of Divine Providence in all the varied dispensations of the past, and she fancied she could dimly discern to what it pointed in the Future. So have others fancied, but how many has that Future proved to be right?

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